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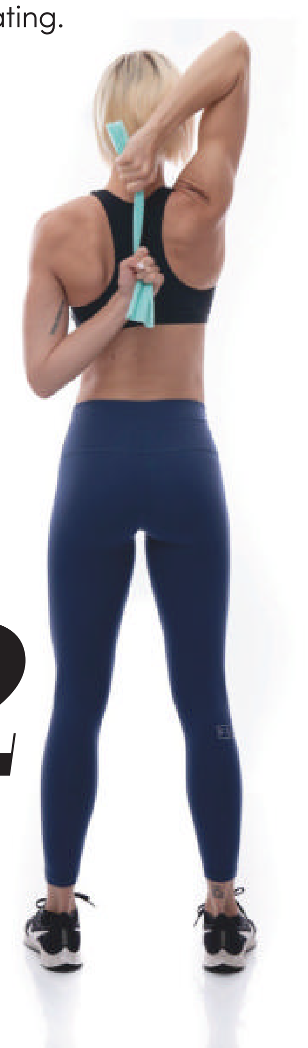

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BECOME A WELLNESS WARRIOR—AND SURVIVE THE HOLIDAYS!

Renowned yoga instructor, personal trainer, track athlete and life coach Koya Webb has designed the perfect six-week program to get you through the holidays with ease and sanity. Her unique workouts blend yoga, strength training, running drills and high-intensity interval training and pair perfectly with your mood and your schedule. Check in on the reg for launch updates and exclusive *Oxygen* reader discounts, as well as an exclusive interview with the Wellness Warrior herself!

Chicken Soup for the Soul

Nourish your body, improve digestion and increase energy with these nutrient-dense chicken soup recipes.

MUSIC, MAN

Power up your workout with these goal-getting playlists designed by professor Costas Karageorghis, Ph.D., from Brunel University London.

AT-HOME INTENSITY

Feeling unmotivated by your home-based workouts? Use these tips to infuse excitement back into your training.

FIT BABY ON BOARD

Kettlebell expert and *Oxygen* Ambassador Lisa Maximus delivers solid advice to ensure you're exercising safely and effectively while you're training for two.

WEIGHTING GAMES

Celebrity trainer and health coach Jill de Jong offers tips to help change your mindset and banish weight-related anxiety once and for all.

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Photo of Koya Webb by Cory Sorensen / Top & Pants: Alo Yoga

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Lose weight, feel great

Morning shake can help you lose weight

By Amber Rios

Being a health and nutrition correspondent means that companies frequently send me their products, and ask for my stamp of approval. Most of the time I dive into research, give the product a try, and send the company honest feedback about what they'll need to change before I'll recommend it. Plus my hectic job and my determination to stay fit means I'm always hunting for a quick and nutritious way to fill up on nutrients my body needs. So I can confidently say, "I've tried it all".

Last Tuesday work was especially hectic, but I'd booked with my $200 an hour personal trainer, Tony, a triathlon winning, organic-to-the-bone fitness guy with a ten mile long track record of whipping the "who's who" into shape in record time, so I had to go. He noticed that my set count was down and playfully asked, "Feeling a little tired today?", as he handed me a bottle from his gym bag. After one sip I figured that there was no way this could be healthy because the creamy chocolate flavor was just too delicious. Still, he'd never risk his reputation.

With more than a healthy dose of scepticism I decided to investigate this shake he'd called INVIGOR8.

Turns out, it's a full meal replacement shake, which stunned me because virtually every other shake I'd researched had tasted chalky, clumpy and packed with hidden "no-no's" like cheap protein, tons of artificial ingredients, not to mention harmful synthetic dyes, additives, sugars, preservatives, and hormones. And even though INVIGOR8's full meal replacement shake cost more than many of the shakes I've tried, it was about half the price of my favorite salad, and the nutrition profile looked second to none.

Wanting to know more, I reached out to a few of the people who were talking about it on trustworthy fitness forums. By the next morning three people got back to me saying,

"As a trainer I love Invigor8. It's definitely helped me to have more all-day energy, plus build the kind of lean sculpted muscle that burns more fat."

"Yes, I'll recommend it, it tastes great, and I really like how it keeps me feeling full for hours."

"I'm a marathon runner and a friend recommended it to me. Drinking it has become a part of my regular training routine, because my time has improved, my energy is up, and I'm thinking more clearly than ever before."

I decided to take my investigation one step further by researching the development of INVIGOR8. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that the company went to great lengths to keep INVIGOR8 free of harmful ingredients.

The makers of INVIGOR8 were determined to make the first real, **natural, non-GMO** nutritional shake & green superfood. The result is a meal replacement shake that contains **100% grass-fed whey** that has a superior nutrient profile to the grain-fed whey found in most shakes, **metabolism boosting raw coconut oil, hormone free colostrum** to promote a **healthy immune system, Omega 3, 6, 9-rich chia and flaxseeds,** superfood greens like **kale, spinach, broccoli, alfalfa, and chlorella,** and clinically tested **cognitive enhancers for improved mood and brain function.** The company even went a step further by including a balance of **pre and probiotics** for optimal **digestive health, uptake, and regularity** and **digestive enzymes** so your body **absorbs the high-caliber nutrition** you get from INVIGOR8.

As a whole-foods nutritionist with a thriving practice I understand the importance of filling my body with the best Mother Nature has to offer. I have always been reluctant to try new products because I was never sure of the impact they would have on my energy, and weight. INVIGOR8 is different, not only because it's delicious, but because it helps me to maintain the energy I need to run my busy practice, while helping me to stay fit and toned. Considering all of the shakes I've tried, I can honestly say that the results I've experienced from INVIGOR8 are nothing short of amazing.

A company spokesperson confirmed an exclusive offer for Oxygen readers: if you order this month, you'll receive $10 off your first order by using promo code "**O2**" at checkout. You can order INVIGOR8 today at Invigor8.com or by calling 1-800-958-3392.

Dead woman (not) walking

I don't know about you, but this year makes my brain tired. And when my brain is tired, my body is tired, and when my body is tired, motivation runs for the hills. My goals cease to hold importance, and some even die a slow, painful death. Lack of motivation is one of the biggest reasons people fail at their fitness programs, and coming into the holidays where temptation abounds, you need that motivational shield to repel all the confections and libations being thrown at you from all sides.

Photo by Kimberly Metz

This is why I was immediately intrigued by the "dead man's test," which was highlighted in our story "Motivated by Science" on Page 90. The idea goes like this: A behavior is something a living person can do, for example walk, run, eat or smile. Therefore, if a dead person can do it, it is not a behavior — don't eat, don't run, don't laugh. I decided to give myself this test for a week and see just how close to dead I really was.

As it turns out, I already had one foot in the grave. I caught myself more than 40 times failing this test. My most consistent failures: telling myself, *Don't stay up so late tonight,* and telling my 7-year-old, *Don't forget to ___ (fill in the blank).*

While I can't completely protect my brain — and by proxy my body — from the drain of life events, I decided to flip my internal script so at least I was promoting action rather than inaction. I started small: *I will go to bed at 10 tonight,* and to the kiddo, *Please remember to ___ (fill in the blank).* Of course, there was no magical poof sound indicating that my life and mental health was about to turn around, but at least now I was cognizant of this bad habit and could work reversing it in the hopes of resurrecting my motivation.

If you're so inclined, I recommend giving yourself this test for a week. At the very least, it's sort of fun — and it might even help buoy you back up above the dragging undercurrent of the stress of life.

LARA McGLASHAN
Brand Direcor and Editor-in-Chief

@LaraOxyEditor @LaraFitnessEditor

MY OBSESSED-WITH LIST

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$20 (pack of 4), cbdliving.com

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$80–$100, flexdiscfit.com

ATLAS COFFEE CLUB

Yes, there are tons of coffee clubs out there, but Atlas is unique in that it highlights sustainably sourced beans from a new country every month. And yes, they taste as rich and exotic as the countries from whence they came.
$14/month, atlascoffeeclub.com

VERTIBALL

Accurately rolling out a knot on your flip side with a lacrosse ball is tricky. But this massager from Vertiball can be mounted to any surface at any height so you can target those trigger points while standing.
$60, vertiball.com or amazon.com

FRESH N' LEAN

If you want to eat healthy but hate cooking (like me), check out this Fresh n' Lean meal delivery. Its customizable plans include keto, Paleo and vegan, and all the meals are organic and preservative-, gluten- and hormone-free.
Starting at $9/meal, freshnlean.com

contributors

Lindsay Broekel

Joe Wuebben

Sarah Kolvas

Lindsay Broekel

Model for "Parallel You-Niverse," Page 20, and "Stop What You're Doing," Page 40

Clearly, since she can snatch 150 pounds and clean-and-jerk 205, Olympic weightlifter Lindsay Broekel is no stranger to training pain. "But while shooting this article, I learned that isometric movements are really difficult!" she says, laughing.

When not training for lifting meets in her kick-ass garage gym (also our shoot location!), Broekel works in the family business. "We own a natural grocery store called Down to Earth Natural Foods in Massachusetts," she says. "We have been open since 1977, and my whole family works there!"

Broekel is also a collector of wolf tattoos and currently sports a total of eight. "My favorite is probably the set of wolves I have on my neck," she says. "I'm a huge fan of Norse mythology and they represent Geri and Freki, the wolves that accompany the god Odin."

Joe Wuebben

Author of "Motivated by Science," Page 90

Motivation can be tricky, even for seasoned exerciser Joe Wuebben. "I think you need to be motivated by multiple things to be consistent and successful," he says. "A few things that motivate me are my quality of life today and in years to come and setting a healthy example for my children."

In researching this article, Wuebben discovered that he himself was guilty of a common motivational error. "I was violating the 'dead man test' by saying I want to 'stop' eating certain unhealthy foods," he says. "Words matter when it comes to setting goals, so framing your intentions in the right way is key."

Wuebben hits the gym five days a week and tries to stay active, even on his days off. "My kids both play sports — soccer, basketball, flag football," he says. "At age 45, I'm not as athletic as I used to be, but because I'm still in good shape, I am able to keep up with them!"

Sarah Kolvas

Author of "Success Stories," Page 86, and "Future of Fitness," Page 88

As an associate editor for our sister publication *IDEA Fitness Journal,* Sarah Kolvas spends most of her time entrenched in studies and science, so writing up these departments for *Oxygen* was a welcome change of pace. "These articles gave me the opportunity to talk to multiple women about their own fitness journeys rather than those told from a fit-pro perspective," she says. "I enjoyed the variety of experiences they shared — it was a lot of fun!"

Though she owns that she was overweight growing up, Kolvas now lives a fit, active lifestyle and can regularly be found hiking, lifting and biking. "I also recently purchased a paddle board and am looking forward to making that a regular activity, too."

What's on her fitness bucket list? "Meditating every day for a year, being able to do 10 pull-ups and learning how to snowboard," she says. "My first attempt was rough, and I need a lot more practice!"

WE LOVE THAT OUR CONTRIBUTORS WALK THE TALK AND ARE HONORED TO HAVE THEM AS PART OF OUR BRAND.

//YOUR GET-LEAN GUIDE FOR SUMMER//
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DECONSTRUCTING THE MARKETING JARGON

Two Truths ...

I once read that your models were never photoshopped and that "every muscle and curve were earned." Is this still true today? I'm looking for a real magazine with strong, fit, real women — not those who are photoshopped or airbrushed — as role models for my two young daughters.

— CHRISTY, VIA EMAIL

Editor's Note: *Christy, yes that is still true today, and we take great pride in the fact that we portray women as they are – wrinkles, stretch marks and all!*

I just read your editor's note in the Summer 2020 issue and it was nice to read some positive talk and appreciation for others. In this crazy world we live in, it is always great to open your magazine and just read about health, fitness and wellness and nothing else. This magazine is such a stress relief from all the current events and politics. *Oxygen* and OC6 with Nikki Snow have helped me immensely during this tough time in coping with my stress and anxiety. Thank you!

— KATIE, VIA EMAIL

... And a Lie

I heard a rumor that *Oxygen* is doing away with print and will now only be digital. Is that true? I need to actually hold my magazine!

— HAYLEY, VIA EMAIL

Editor's Note: *Not true! Though many other fitness magazines have gone that direction, we are dedicated to preserving our print edition as best we can, and if we have anything to say about it, our hard-copy paper mag will be around for a long, long time! It is true, however, that we are launching a new membership-based digital platform called Club Oxygen. We have spent the past two years developing and curating some incredible members-only content, including three brand-new 90-day workout programs, a video exercise library, tons of healthy recipes, cool swag and giveaways, coach-hosted live-stream training and nutrition seminars, and much, much more. Stay tuned here and on OxygenMag.com for details about this amazing new offering as things progress!*

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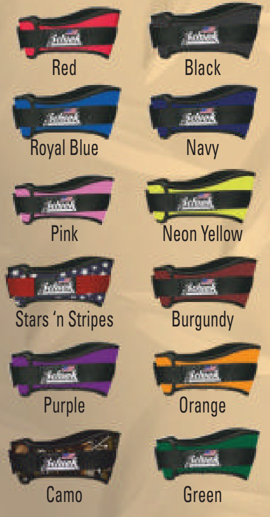

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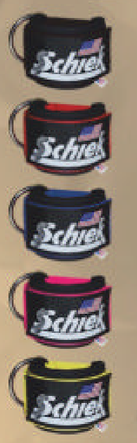

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LOVE FOR LACTIC ACID

▸ EXERCISE HAS BEEN STUDIED FOR ITS POSITIVE EFFECT ON MEMORY AND LEARNING, AND NEW RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT LACTIC ACID — THE BURNING BYPRODUCT OF INTENSE EXERCISE —COULD BE THE REASON. LACTIC ACID SEEMS TO BE A PREFERRED SOURCE OF ENERGY FOR BRAIN CELLS, NEURONS IN PARTICULAR, WHICH COULD PROMOTE THE FORMATION OF BLOOD VESSELS AND NEURAL CONNECTIONS IN THE BRAIN.

By Lara McGlashan, MFA, CPT

Cellular cleanup crew

Like everything, cells wear out over time, but new research from the University of Copenhagen found that exercise helps clean out the old to make way for the new. Study participants completed an intense eight- to 10-minute training session on an exercise bike and had their blood drawn before and after the workout. They discovered that exercise prompted an increase in the activity of ubiquitin – aka the "death marker" protein – which targets, attaches itself to and removes worn-out proteins in muscles so they can be replaced with new, stronger ones. Keep up those high-intensity interval training workouts!

50 billion

» The number of dollars the U.S. could save annually in health-care costs associated with metabolic syndromes, heart disease, diabetes and other lifestyle-induced health conditions if people simply ate healthier.

Source: *PLOS Medicine*

Exercise Makes You Nervous

No, not in the emotional sense: Research published in *JNeurosci* found that the first few weeks of strength training helps fortify your nervous system and doesn't necessarily help build muscle tissue. So if you've started a new program and aren't seeing results, be patient – you're just getting nervous!

DRINK COFFEE, LOSE BODY FAT

Women who drink two to three cups of coffee per day have lower body fat – as much as 4 percent lower! – than women who imbibe less. Surprisingly, the results were consistent whether or not the beverage was caffeinated, which suggests that other bioactive compounds in coffee work to help regulate weight.

Jane's addiction

PROFESSOR ERIN CALDERONE ANSWERS THIS BURNING QUESTION.

Q+A

Am I addicted to exercise?

Considering that most people could stand to be more active, the idea of an exercise addiction may seem odd. Not only is it possible, but it also can be dangerous.

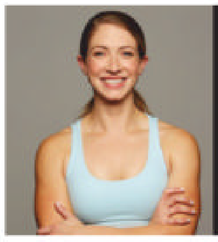
"Exercise addition is often difficult to recognize because on the surface, it looks like a dedication to your goals," says Wendy Batts, MS, LMT, NASM-CPT, PES, CES, assistant professor at California University of Pennsylvania. "But these goals can often be unrealistic and make us believe we need to work harder."

Dying to Be Fit

If you've ever experienced a "runner's high," you understand how calm and relaxed exercise can make you feel, and indeed distance running can be a welcome escape from life's mental and emotional stressors. But if you begin to feel anxious, irritable or depressed when you miss a workout and/or regularly feel the need to exercise for longer and longer durations, you could be experiencing a primary exercise addiction. This compulsion for exercise is fueled by a need for that psychological relief as well as the endorphin and dopamine release that makes you feel calm and relaxed — a sense of happiness that happens only when you exercise, Batts adds.

A secondary exercise addiction is often related to body image, and rather than being an escape from stress, it becomes a "punishment" for eating certain foods and is often accompanied by disordered eating. For example, someone might feel compelled to do additional cardio as punishment for eating a cookie at lunch. "Exercise should be more than just a vehicle to lose weight or burn more calories," Batts reminds. "It should enhance all aspects of life [and well-being]."

With both primary and secondary addictions, overtraining is almost a guarantee because without adequate rest and recovery, the body will eventually break down and incur an injury. Well-planned schedules function off the principles of progressive overload and variation and always include intentional rest days and deload weeks for optimal recovery.



BY ERIN CALDERONE,
MS, NASM MASTER TRAINER, CES, BCS, AFAA-GFI, Assistant Professor of Kinesiology, Glendale Community College in Southern California

Life in Balance

Residential programs and individual or group counseling can help kick-start the recovery process and create a new identity around exercise. If you believe you might be at risk for developing an exercise addiction, try these strategies to regain balance.

- *Take a break.* Schedule a rest day or even a rest week, bearing in mind that recovery is just as important for your body as the stress of exercise. Do nothing more challenging than foam rolling, gentle stretching or easy, fun activities like family walks or bike rides.
- *Call in a sub.* Implement a few stress-busting strategies that have nothing to do with exercise such as journaling, meditation, music or art. Find something that helps you get out of your head and into the moment, just like exercise does.
- *Hire a coach.* A trainer, nutritionist, therapist or life coach can each give you different insights and help you develop health-promoting habits. Seek out certified professionals and be open to the journey of self-discovery.

HOPE AND HELP

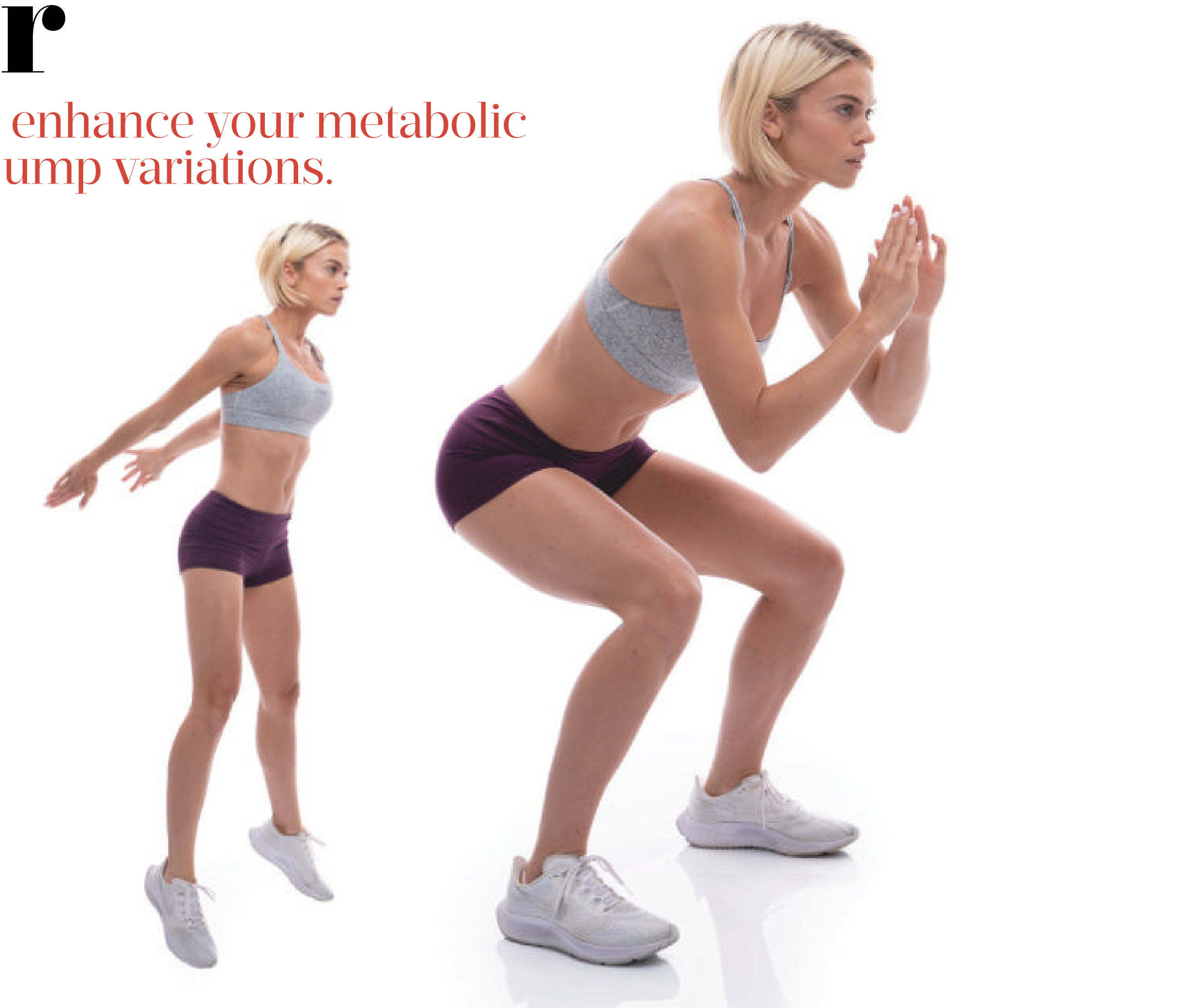
Is exercise hurting rather than helping you? If you answer yes to several of these questions, you may need to shift your perspective:

- Do you feel anxious, upset or depressed when you miss a workout?
- Do you always feel the need to do more exercise than you had planned to do?
- Do you feel as if you don't push yourself hard enough?
- Do you think you should do more reps or add in another workout to make up for something you ate?
- Do you regularly give up fun things like being with friends and family to go to the gym?
- Have you ever pushed through a painful injury rather than taking a day off?

Catching air

Dial up your vertical power and enhance your metabolic capacity with these four squat-jump variations.

Very little compares to the squat jump for developing lower-body power, and whether your goal is to destroy your quads, spike your heart rate or increase your vertical hops, this move is the gold standard. Use these four moves to level up and reach new heights.



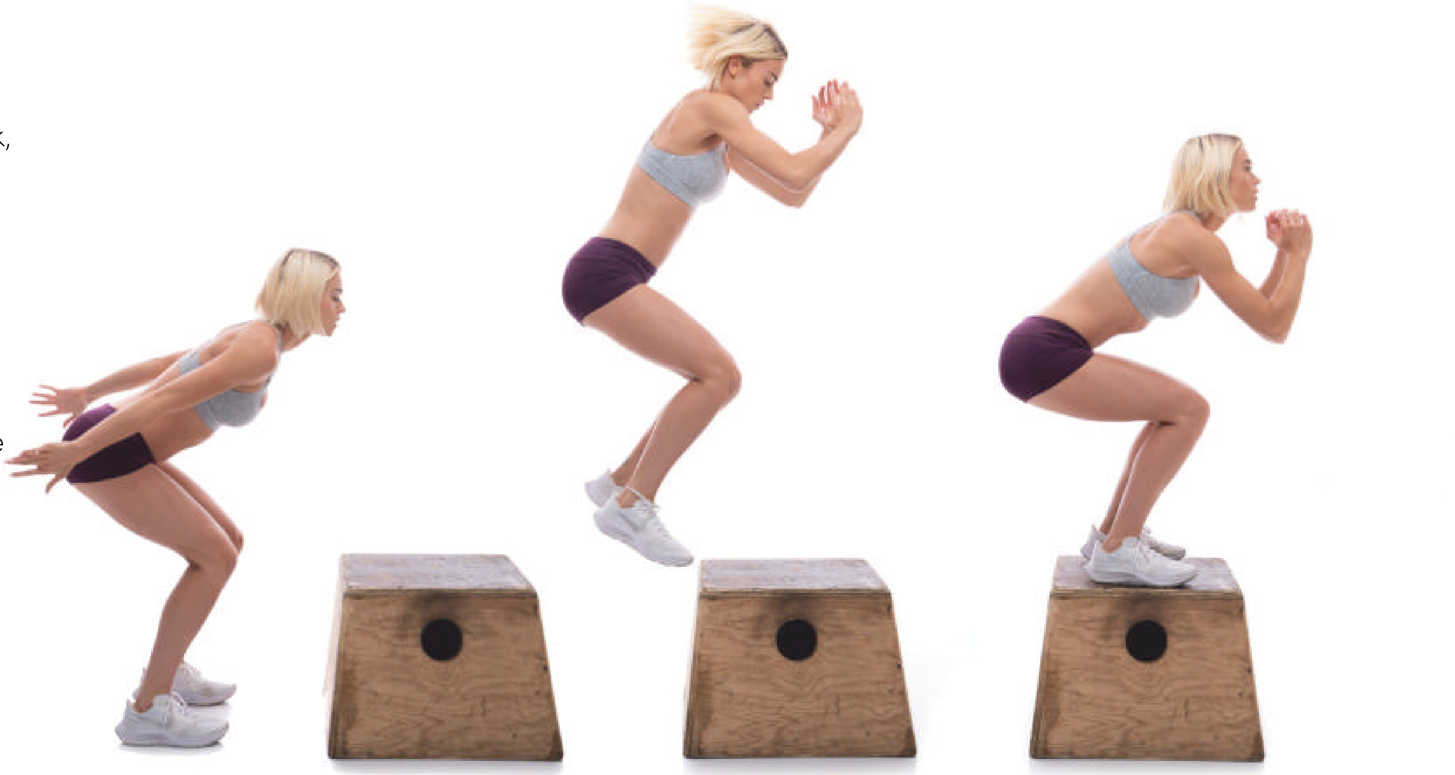
LEVEL 1: SQUAT JUMP TO STABILIZATION

What goes up also must land, and this Level 1 move trains your neuromuscular system to efficiently absorb the impact as your body falls back to earth at a rate of 9.8m/s2. Here, jump height does not matter — it's all about the landing.

Stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart, toes forward, arms at your sides. Bend your knees and hips to drop quickly into a shallow squat, then explosively extend your hips, knees and ankles to jump straight up into the air. Land softly and absorb the impact by lowering immediately into a shallow squat. Hold three to five seconds and check your form — knees aligned with your second/third toes, chest lifted, hips back, chin level with the ground. Then stand up, rest 30 seconds and repeat.

Troubleshooting

- If you lose your balance upon landing, make your jump a little lower for better control.
- If your knees cave in during takeoff or landing, you may have weak hip and/or knee stabilizers. Strengthen them with moves such as bridges, clamshells and resistance-loop monster walks to prevent injury down the line.



LEVEL 2: BOX JUMP

Once you've mastered your landing, it's time to work on height. Using a box actually reduces the impact on your joints because the distance you "fall" back to earth is shorter and there is less time for acceleration to build.

Face a box with your feet shoulder-width apart, arms at your sides. Bend your knees and hips to lower into a shallow squat and swing your arms behind you. Then explosively extend your hips, knees and ankles and swing your arms forward as you leap up and onto the box. Land as softly and noiselessly as possible, and hold the landing three to five seconds. Step down one foot at a time and repeat.

Troubleshooting

- Resist the temptation to use a mega-high box. The point here is not to see how high you can lift your legs in front of you but rather to gain vertical height using a moderate box so you can acclimate to "falling" a shorter distance. Yes, there should still be impact but substantially less, meaning your joints can handle more reps.
- Your jump should be vertical for height, not forward for distance. Stand about 6 inches away from the box, or as close as you can without catching your toes on its edge, to ensure you're on the up and up.

By Erin Calderone, MS, NASM Master Trainer, CES, BCS, AFAA-GFI

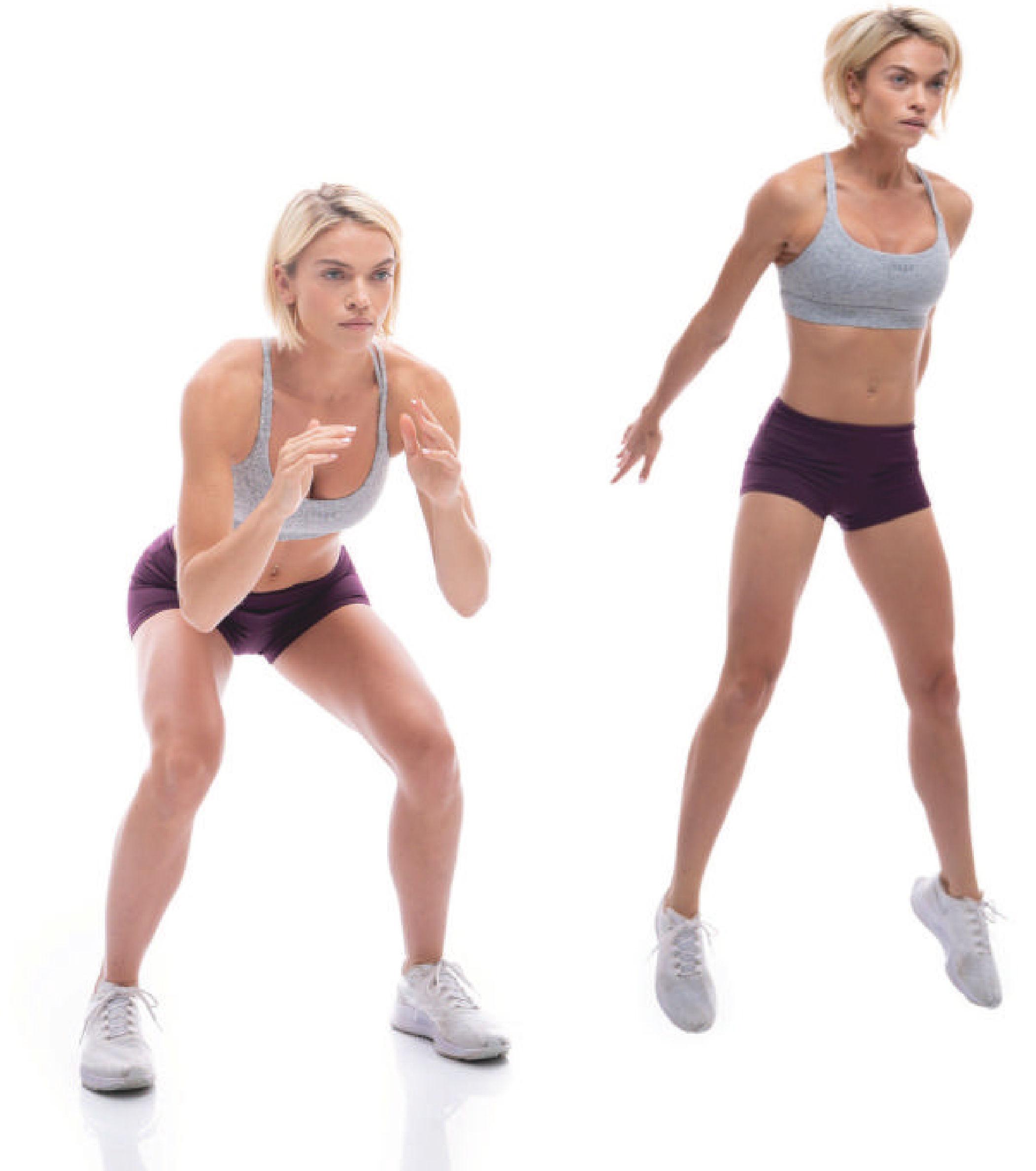
LEVEL 3: REPEAT SQUAT JUMP

Linking your reps together trains reactivity — e.g., how fast you are able to redirect the energy from one rep to the next — and the force of your landing acts as a propellant to help launch you back into the air.

Stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart, toes forward, arms at your sides. Bend your knees and hips to drop quickly into a shallow squat, then explosively extend your hips, knees and ankles to jump into the air. Land softly, absorbing your impact by compressing into a squat, then immediately explode into the next rep.

Troubleshooting

- Don't sacrifice height for speed. Being explosive requires full extension of your hips, knees and ankles, so make sure each rep is perfect.
- Flexion or extension (rounding/arching) of your spine is unwanted movement that wastes energy and could cause back issues, so consciously maintain good posture and brace your core throughout to stabilize your spine.



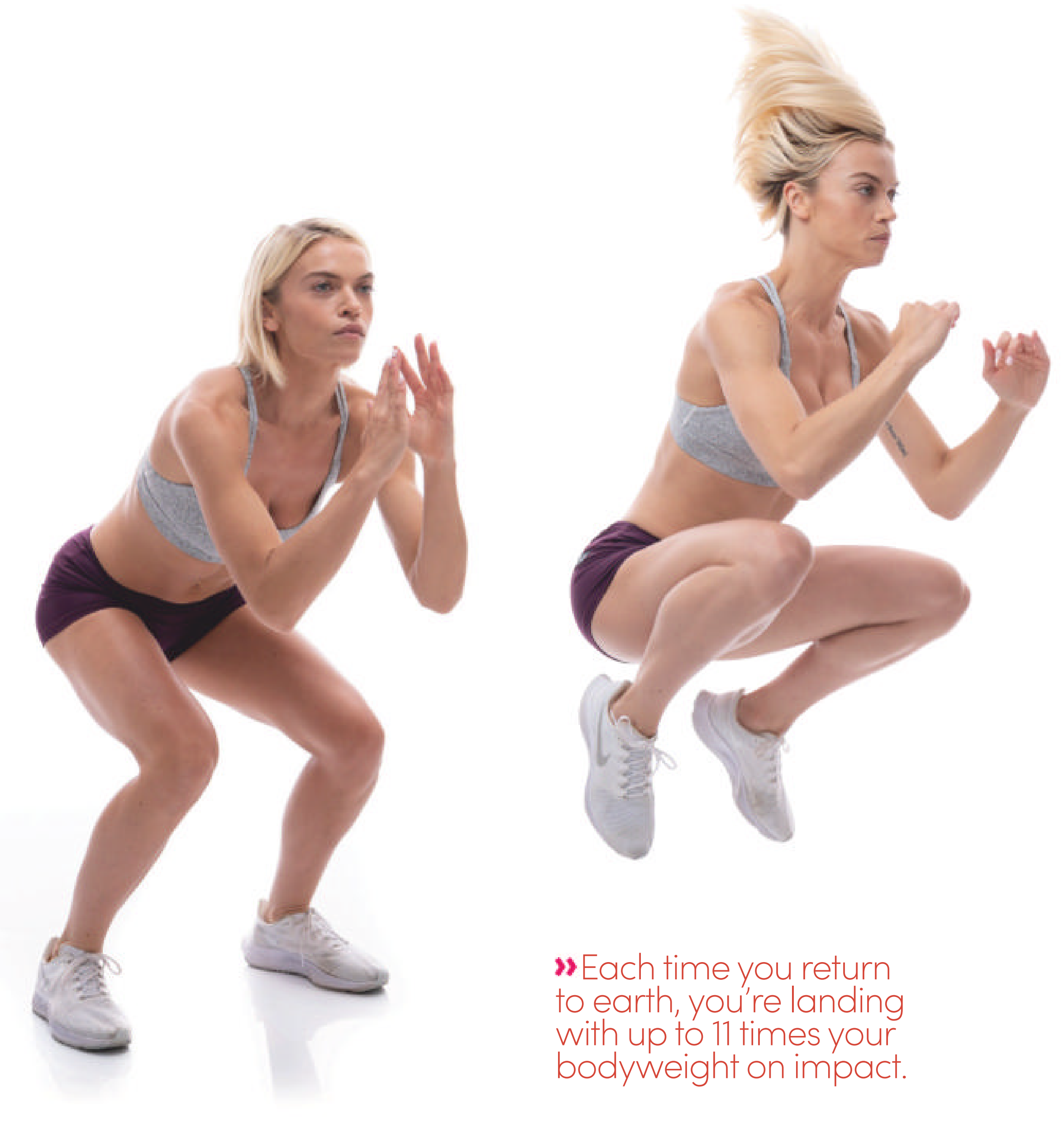
LEVEL 4: SQUAT TUCK JUMP

This is the big kahuna of squat jumps and is amazing for increasing reactive power. String together a set of 10 to 20 to set your legs and lungs on fire.

Perform a squat jump as with Level 3. Once airborne, quickly lift your knees to hip height in front of you, then extend them quickly and in time to land softly. Rebound right into the next rep.

Troubleshooting:

- Rounding your back to "hug" your knees tips your center of gravity forward and can cause you to land on your toes. Keep your chest lifted and your focus forward throughout. Better yet, give yourself a tuck target by holding your arms straight out in front of you and aim to touch them with your knees.
- Because the tuck has to be done quickly, you might tend to slam your feet back to the floor. To protect your joints, ensure your landings are always quiet, and jump on softer surfaces such as rubber flooring or grassy areas rather than concrete.



» Each time you return to earth, you're landing with up to 11 times your bodyweight on impact.

Photos by Ian Travis Barnard / Model: Paige Munroe / Hair & Makeup: Bianca Corso / Top: Nobull / Shorts: Fleo / Shoes: Nike

Parallel you-niverse

It's happy hour — time to hit the bar(s)!

If nothing else, 2020 has taught us to be creative with our workouts and that even the simplest equipment can deliver big results. This workout, designed by *Oxygen* coach and all-around badass Amber Dodzweit Riposta, leverages these groovy Lebert EQualizer bars and is designed to torch calories, shred your core and carve out head-to-toe definition — using nothing but your bodyweight! "Performing certain movements outside the gym can be challenging," Lebert ambassador Riposta says. "But using equipment like these bars, you can build muscle and increase definition — without lifting a single dumbbell."

THE WORKOUT

Perform each move for 30 seconds and then rest 30 seconds. Repeat each set three to five times through.

SET 1

Exercise	***Seconds***
▸ Dip to Pike Hold	30
▸ Alternating Reverse Lunge to Incline Push-Up	30
▸ *Rest*	*30*

SET 2

Exercise	***Seconds***
▸ Pull-Up With Alternating Knee Lift	30
▸ Oblique Twist	15 (each side)
▸ *Rest*	*30*

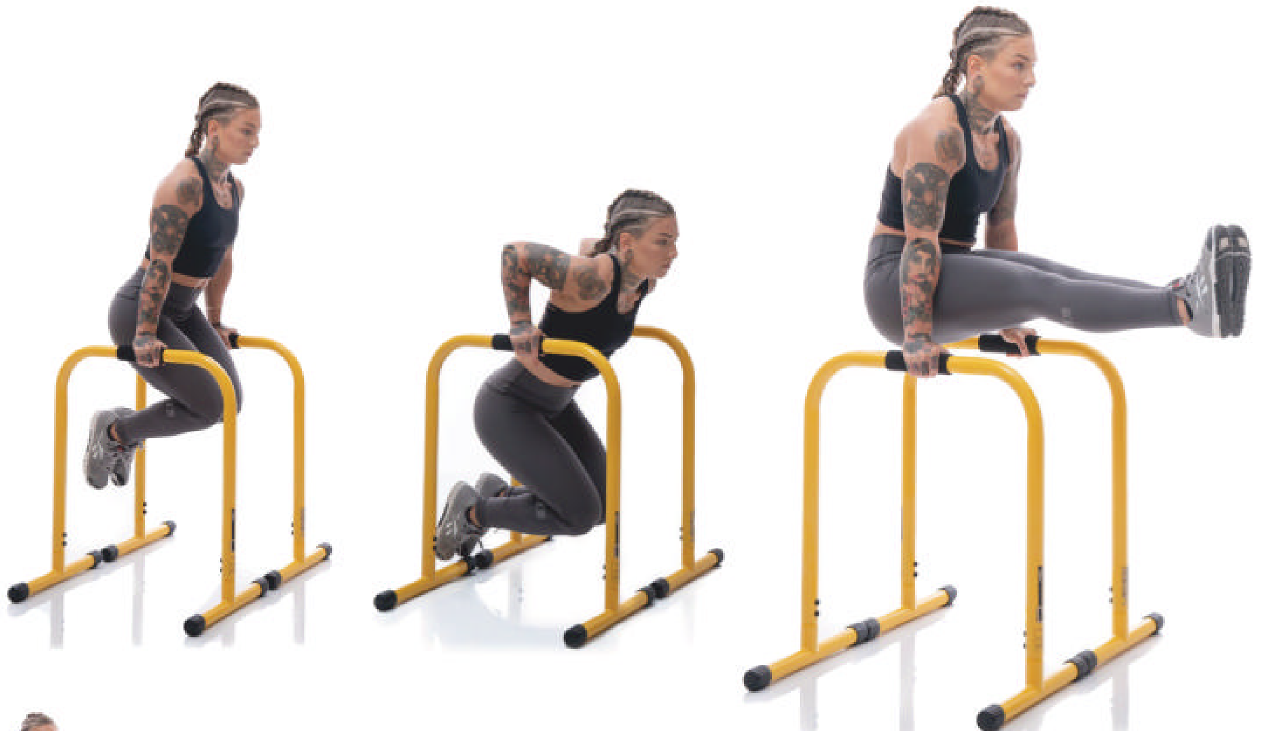
SET 3

Exercise	***Seconds***
▸ Triceps Extension	30
▸ Elevated Plank Knee-to-Chest	30
▸ *Rest*	*30*

DIP TO PIKE HOLD

Set the bars parallel to one another and stand in between them. Take an overhand grip on the bars with your arms straight, then bend your knees and lift your feet so you're suspended between the bars. Keep your core tight and your chest lifted as you bend your elbows and lower into a dip, descending until your arms make 90-degree angles. Then straighten your arms to full extension and extend your legs in front of you so they are parallel with the floor. Hold briefly and then return to the start.

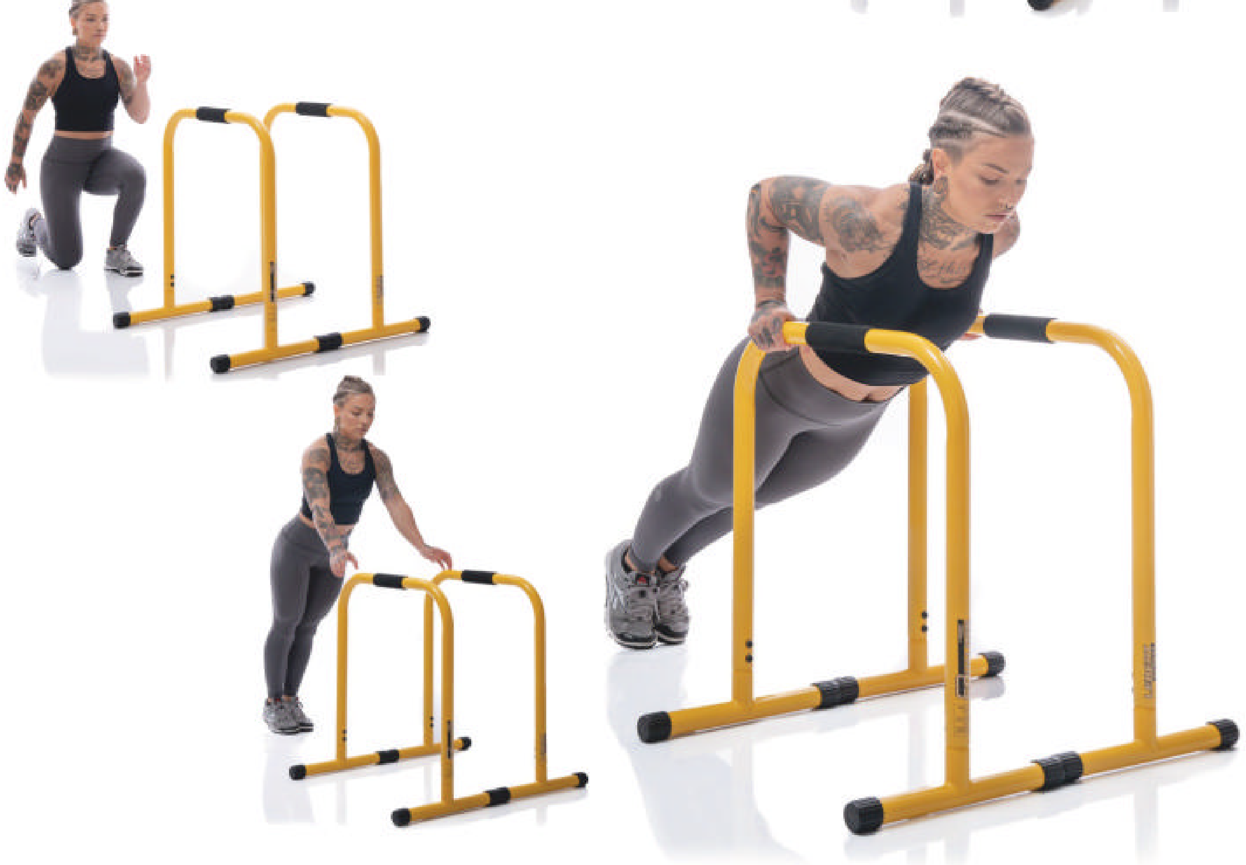
AMBER'S ADVICE: Make sure your arms are straight but not locked during the pike hold to protect your elbow joints.



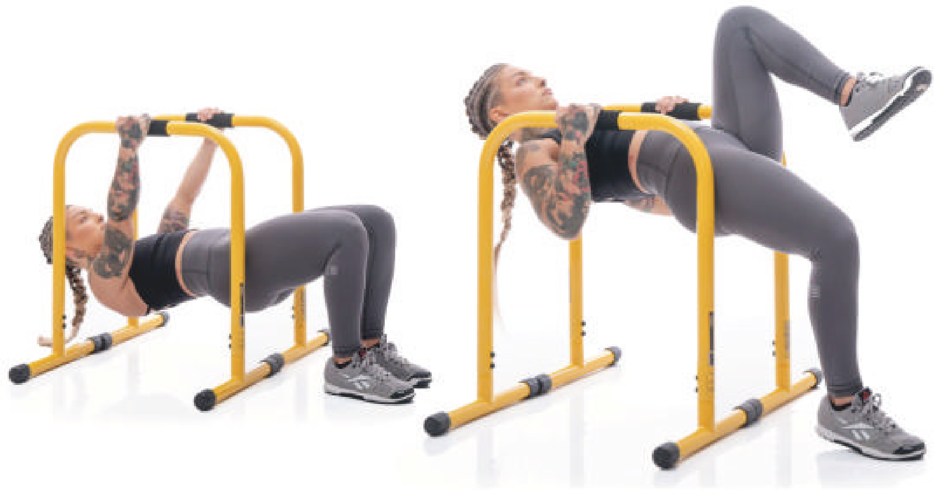
ALTERNATING REVERSE LUNGE TO INCLINE PUSH-UP

Set the bars parallel to one another and stand facing them with your feet hip-width apart. Take a large step behind you, bending both knees to lunge straight down to the floor. Then push off your back foot and bring your legs together as you lean forward and "fall" between the bars, catching yourself with your hands and lowering right into an incline push-up. Extend your arms to push yourself up and off the bars and back to standing. Continue, alternating legs.

AMBER'S ADVICE: Make this move more explosive to amp the intensity: Drive off that back foot out of the lunge and push yourself up and away with force when coming off the bars.



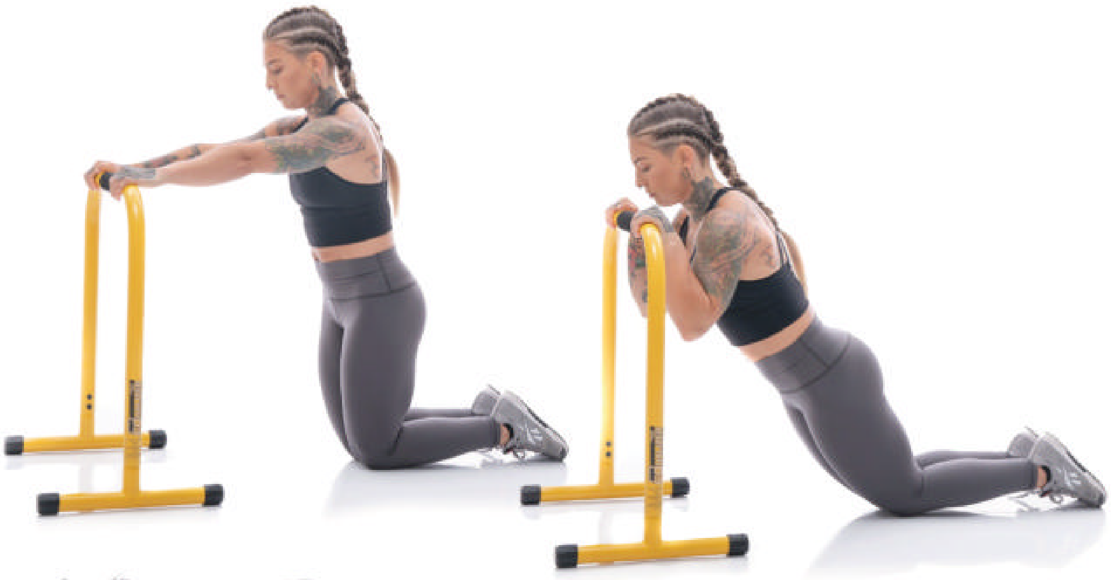
By Lara McGlashan, MFA, CPT



PULL-UP WITH ALTERNATING KNEE LIFT

Set the bars parallel to one another and sit between them. Grasp the bars firmly and plant your feet flat on the floor, knees bent. Draw your shoulder blades together and lift your hips so you're hanging underneath the bars. Drive your elbows down to pull your chest up between the bars, simultaneously lifting one knee over your hips. Return to the start and continue, alternating knees.

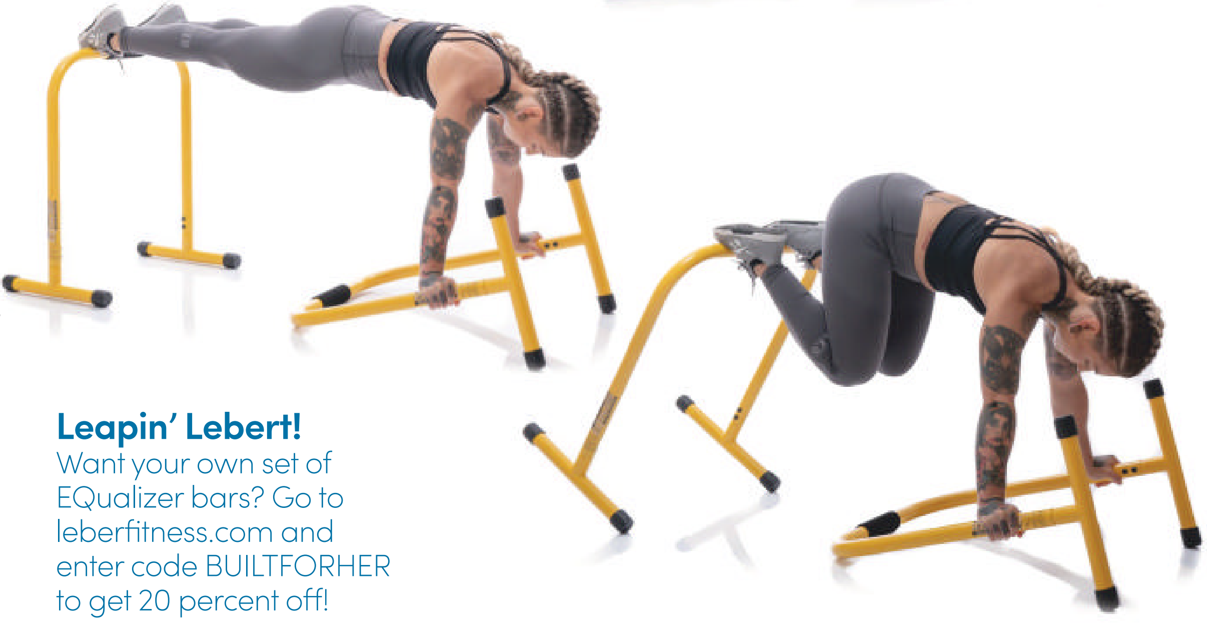
AMBER'S ADVICE: Drive down through your heels for stability and tilt your pelvis anteriorly to best engage your core.



TRICEPS EXTENSION

Kneel in front of a single bar and place both hands on top about shoulder-width apart, arms straight. Brace your core and then slowly bend your elbows and incline toward the bar, hinging from your knees. Use only your triceps to extend your arms and push you back up to vertical.

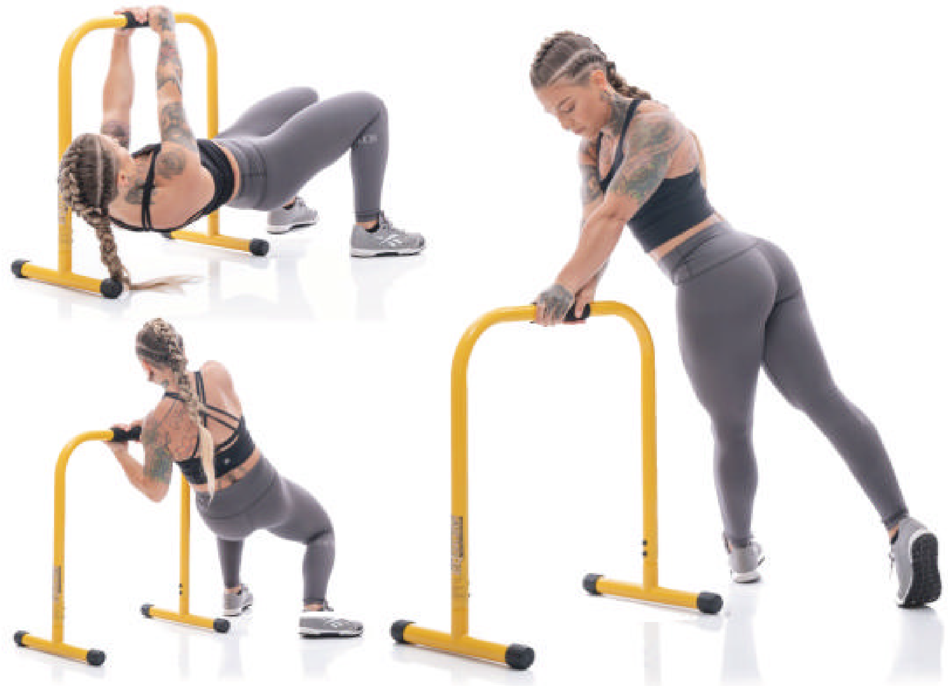
AMBER'S ADVICE: Make the most of this single-joint exercise by really squeezing your triceps hard at the top of the move.



ELEVATED PLANK KNEE-TO-CHEST

Lay one bar on its side and place the other upright a few feet away (as shown). Grasp the sides of the lying bar with your arms straight and extend your legs behind you one at a time so your feet rest, laces down, on top of the standing bar. Find your balance and slowly draw your knees into your chest. Pause briefly and then extend your legs to the start.

AMBER'S ADVICE: Your back might tend to sway in this position, putting you at risk for injury. Tuck your hips to protect your lower back and really engage your core for better balance and muscular engagement.



OBLIQUE TWIST

Sit next to one bar and grasp the center with both hands. Walk your feet out and plant them flat on the floor, knees bent. Lean back, straighten your arms and lift your hips so your body is parallel with the floor and your core is tight. Keep your feet planted as you pull yourself up and around to the front of the bar to come to standing, twisting toward the bar to finish the move. Reverse the steps to return to the start. Do all reps on one side and then switch.

AMBER'S ADVICE: If you're having trouble with this move, think of it in two parts: First, "row" yourself up, then use your obliques to twist your body to the top of the bar and come to standing.

Leapin' Lebert!

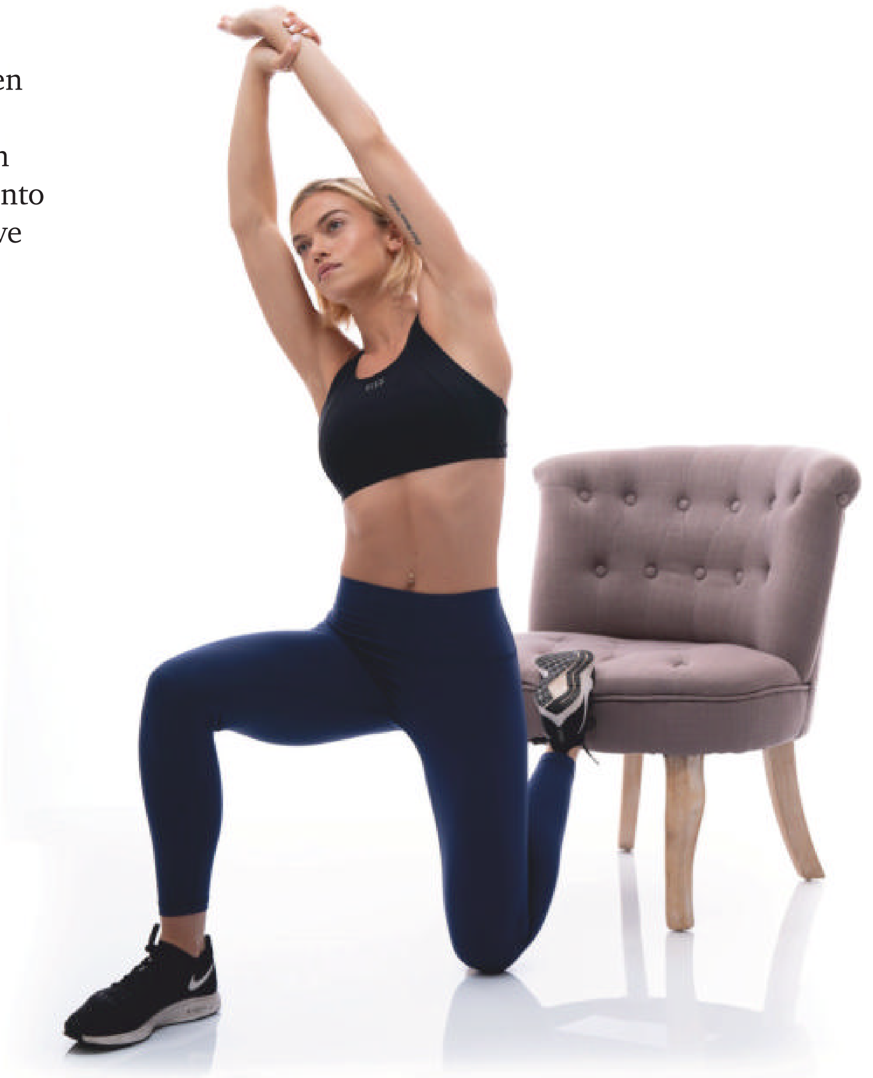
Want your own set of EQualizer bars? Go to leberfitness.com and enter code BUILTFORHER to get 20 percent off!

Photos By Ian Travis Barnard / Model: Lindsay Brockel / Hair: Jill Kashgagian / Makeup: Bianca Corso / Pants: Fleo / Top: Belcorva / Shoes: Reebok

The homestretch

Use these five simple moves to improve mobility and incite total-body harmony anywhere in your home.

Mobility is one of the most overlooked aspects of fitness and often gets left out when you're in a hurry to get out of the gym and back to life. These excuseproof stretches can be done in each room of your home and are easily integrated into your daily life to increase flexibility, manage stress and improve energy, sleep and vitality.



THE LIVING ROOM STRETCH

▸ **TARGETS:** *hip flexors, side body*

Kneel facing away from a chair or couch and lift your left heel up to your glutes. Slide your leg back behind you so your shin is as close to the couch as possible and your thigh is perpendicular to the floor. Bring your right leg forward with your knee bent 90 degrees and tuck your pelvis so you feel a stretch in your left hip flexor. Reach both arms overhead, grab your left wrist with your right hand, and lift up and over to the right while keeping your hips square. Hold and breathe deeply for three seconds, then return to the start. Do five reps on each side.

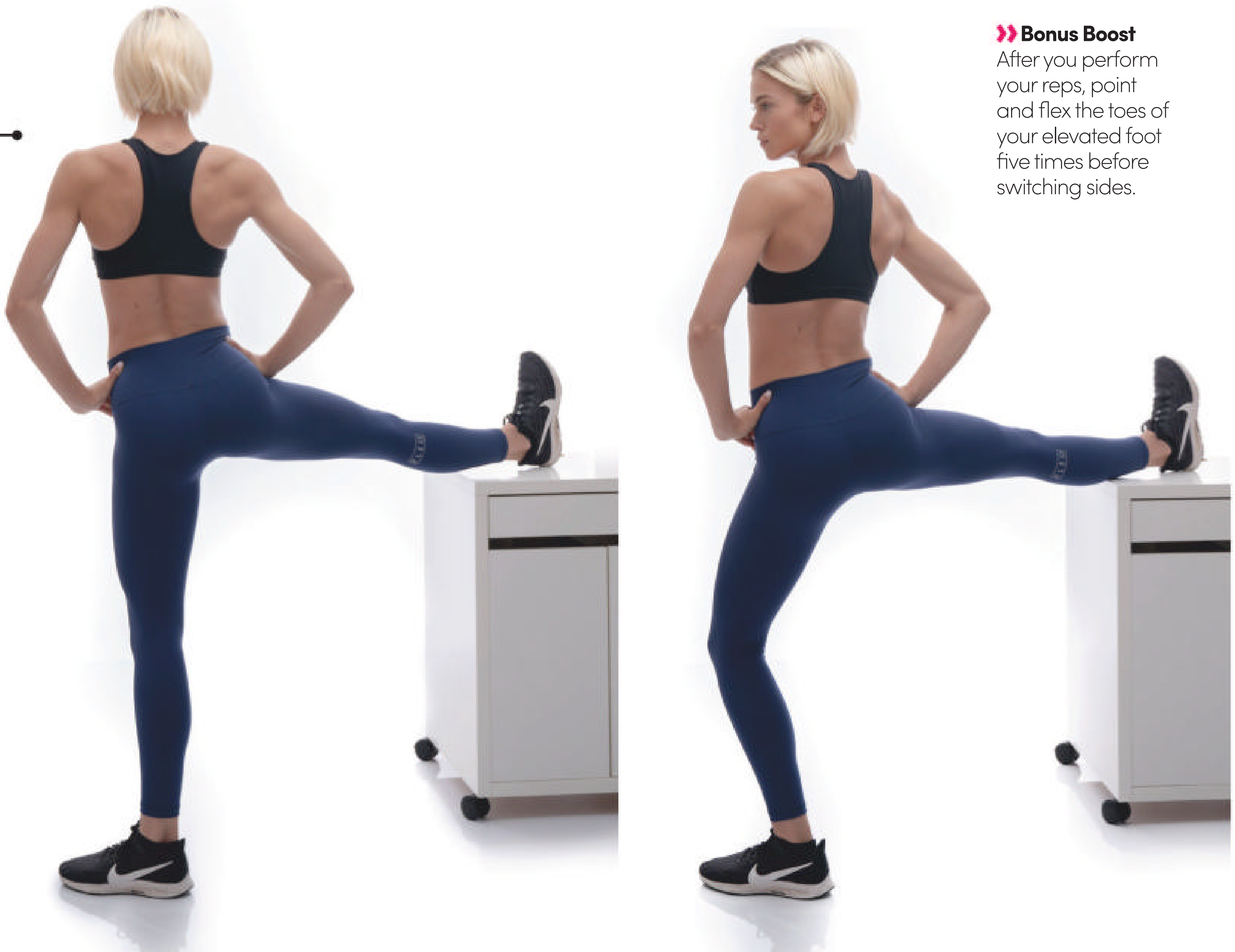
▸ **TIP:** Got super-tight hips? Position your left knee farther away from the couch.

THE KITCHEN STRETCH

▸ **TARGETS:** *medial hamstrings, adductors*

Stand by a cabinet or counter and extend your right leg out to the side, knee straight, and rest your heel on top of the counter. Externally rotate your leg and keep your hips square as you slowly bend your left knee and rotate your torso to the left, then return to the start. Do five reps on each side.

▸ **TIP:** If you can't comfortably get your leg onto the cabinet or counter with your knee straight, use a low chair to modify.



»Bonus Boost
After you perform your reps, point and flex the toes of your elevated foot five times before switching sides.

By Sandra Jersby, NASM-CES/PES, Fascial Stretch Specialist, Thai Massage Therapist

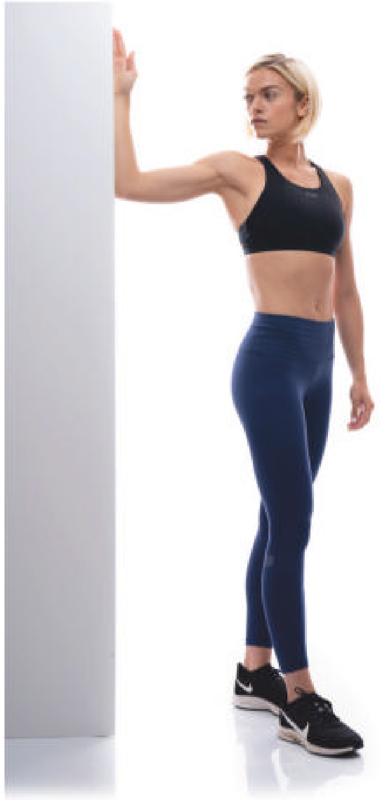
Photos by Ian Travis Barnard / Model: Paige Munroe / Hair & Makeup: Bianca Corso / Top & Pants: Fleo / Shoes: Nike

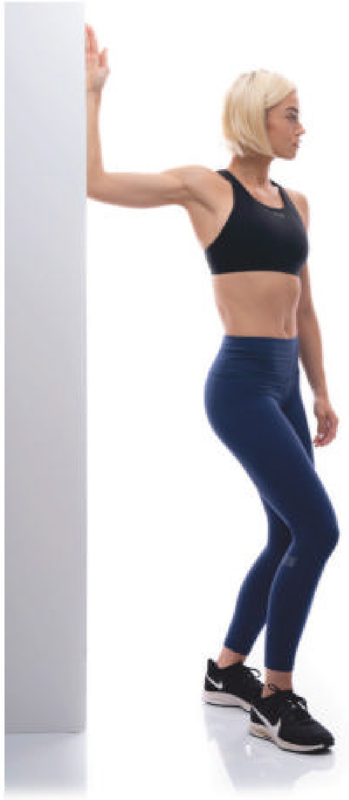
THE DOORWAY STRETCH

TARGETS: *chest, anterior deltoids*

Stand in a doorway with your right leg forward and your left leg back. Raise your right arm to the side at shoulder height with your elbow bent 90 degrees, then place your palm and elbow against the outside of the door frame. Engage your core, then gently turn away from your arm to the left while bending your knees slightly. Slowly return to the start and complete eight reps on each side.

TIP: Try moving your arm higher or lower against the door frame to hit different areas of your chest.



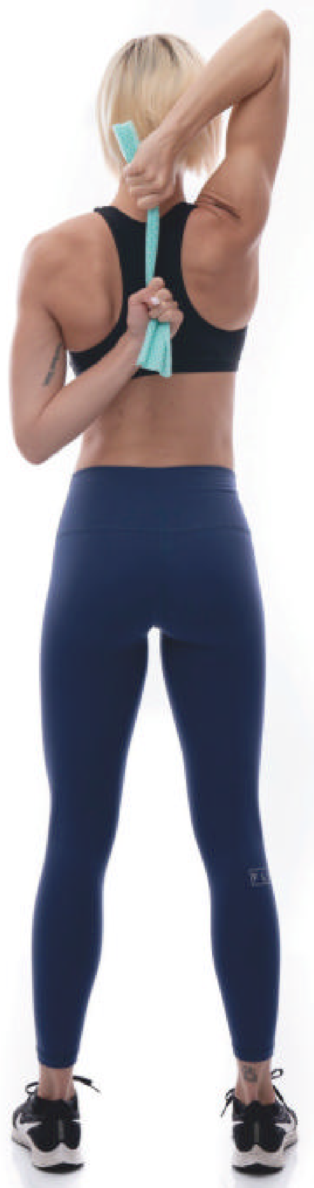


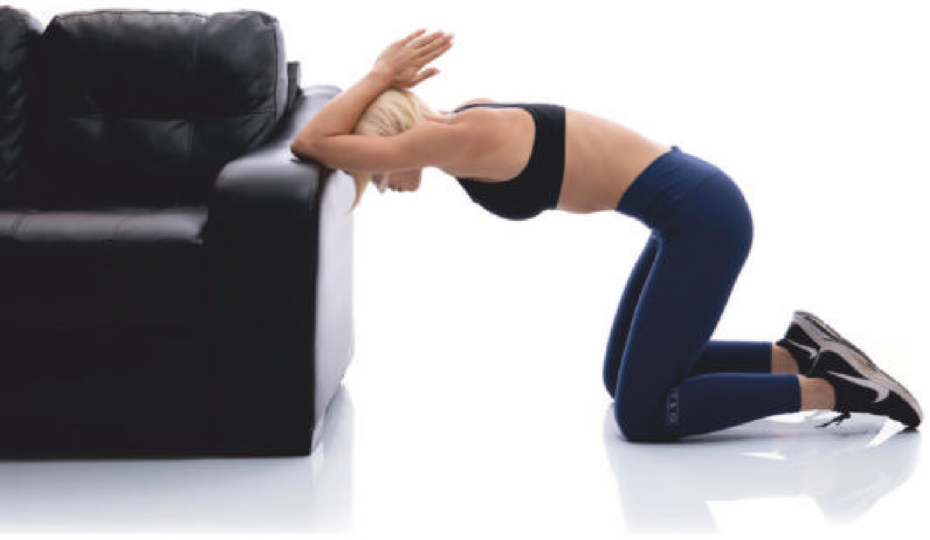
THE BATHROOM STRETCH

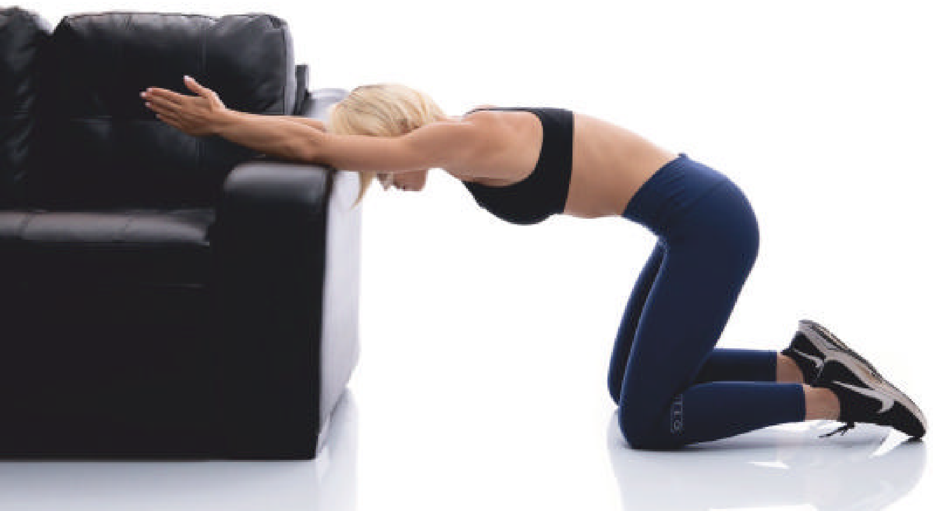
TARGETS: *shoulders, serratus anterior, triceps, chest*

Hold one end of a towel in your right hand overhead with your arm straight, then bend your elbow so the towel hangs behind you along your spine. Reach behind you with your left hand and grab the other end of the towel as high as you can. Lift your chest and simultaneously pull with both hands in opposite directions, holding for five slow breaths. Repeat on both sides.

TIP: Walk your hands incrementally in toward one another along the towel as your muscles relax and your shoulders stretch out.







THE BEDROOM PRAYER STRETCH

TARGETS: *lats, triceps, thoracic spine*

Kneel facing your bed or settee and place your elbows on top bent 90 degrees, then press your palms and forearms together. Walk your knees back so they are directly underneath your hips and your back is straight and parallel with the floor. Drop your head between your arms and press down into your elbows to spread your shoulder blades apart while engaging your abs. Hold here as you slowly bring your palms behind your head, then extend your arms away from you as far as you can while keeping your palms pressed together. Do eight reps.

TIP: If your bed or settee is too high, use a lower surface such as a chair with soft padding to protect your elbows.

›› If you feel a tweak, a twinge or any resistance because of mobility issues in your shoulders, position your elbows wider apart to perform this move.

THE WELLNESS WARRIOR

FORMER TRACK ATHLETE AND LONGTIME YOGI KOYA WEBB SHARES THE TWISTS, TURNS, INJURIES AND BREAKTHROUGHS THAT HAVE SHAPED HER CAREER — AND HER LIFE.

BY JILL SCHILDHOUSE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CORY SORENSEN

KOYA WEBB

BIRTH DATE:
July 30, 1981

CURRENT RESIDENCE:
Marina del Rey, California

HEIGHT:
5'10"

WEIGHT:
155

CERTIFICATIONS:
NASM, E-RYT 500

WEBSITE:
koyawebb.com

INSTAGRAM:
@koyawebb

YOUTUBE:
KoyaWebb

A

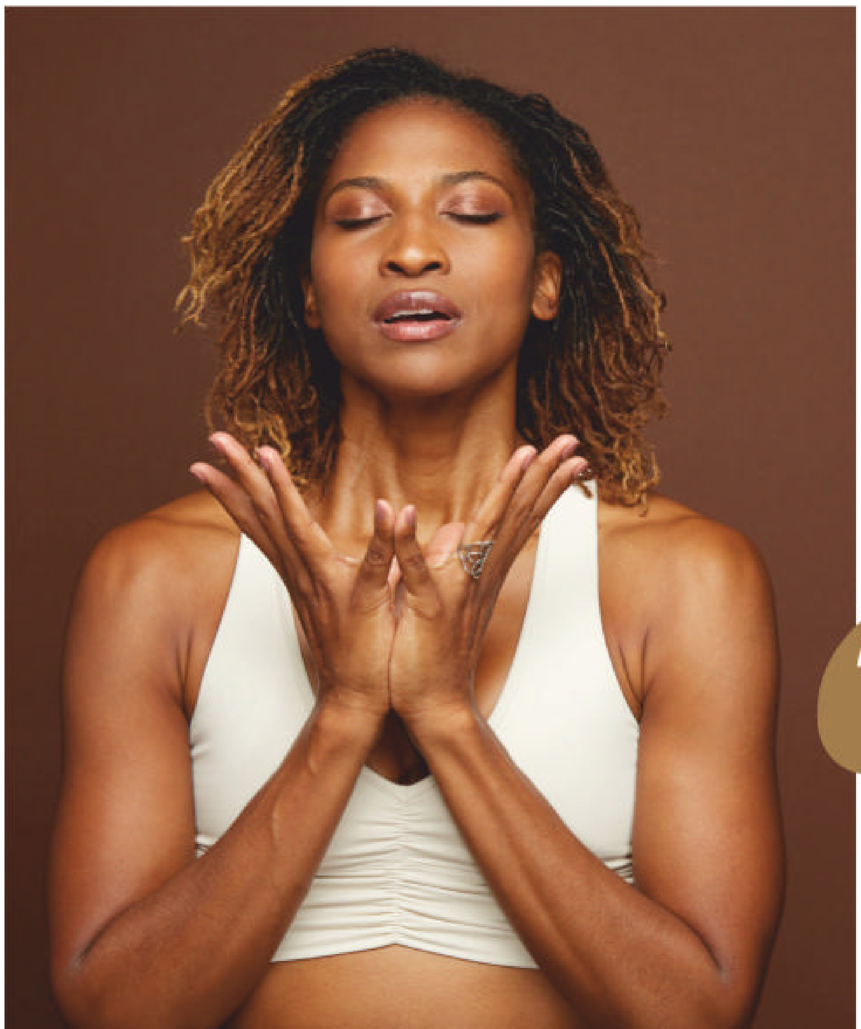
FREEDOM TRAIL

Koya Webb decided at a very young age that athleticism was her ticket to a better life. "I just had a really intense work ethic," says the Tennessee native. "I'm all in, passionate and consistent. I love to work hard, and I believe that anything that I put my heart and soul into will birth success."

Webb joined her high-school basketball team and spent an entire year warming the bench before she was finally allowed to play. Once she was turned loose, there was no stopping her, and by her senior year, she had secured the team's MVP title. Webb also ran track and field and earned several scholarships, which allowed her to attend the college of her choice.

However, her freshman year did not go as planned — but not because of her talent. "Money was tight when I was little, so we lived off powdered milk and never really had an abundance of food," Webb explains. "Now I was at a school with a buffet and had access to all the food I could eat — so I ate all of it!" Webb quickly gained 25 pounds, and that extra ballast put a damper on her athletic ability. She was no longer able to excel at her events, which included the high jump, long jump, shot put and javelin. Even worse, she became the victim of bullying. "I've been bullied my whole life — for being tall, for being skinny, for wearing hand-me-down clothes," she says. "A couple of sorority ladies bullied and hazed me because they found out I was a legacy and wanted to join. It turned me off completely from pledging."

A transfer to Wichita State her sophomore year provided Webb with a new beginning. She made better nutrition decisions, and soon her track career was back on the upswing. But one day while walking home from class her junior year, she experienced an intense pain in her lower back. "I thought I'd gotten shot," Webb recalls. "I fell to the ground in excruciating, sharp pain." The diagnosis was a stress fracture of her L4 vertebra, due in large part to lack of recovery and poor sleep. She was out for the season.



Hair & Makeup: Donna Gast / Tops & Pants: Alo Yoga

AN AWKWARD INTRO

Webb was devastated and fell into a depression. She decided to seek counseling, and after a few sessions, her counselor suggested yoga as a way to cope. But Webb was dubious.

"I'm a Southern Baptist girl and was worried I'd have to worship some weird deities," Webb says, chuckling. But her counselor assured her that yoga was nothing more than stretching. "So I went to this yoga class and couldn't even touch my toes. I remember trying to do a headstand and feeling like my brain was going to ooze out of my skull! I did not fit in. I was so intimidated. And I was like, *This is not for me. I'm an athlete, not a yogi. These people are saying this is blissful. And it's not, it's painful.*"

The instructor recognized her frustration and suggested that Webb focus on breathwork. Together, they took a deep inhale and performed a long, slow exhale. "I felt these chills flow down my body," Webb says. "I didn't realize that, up until then, I hadn't really taken a deep breath since [the injury] happened. I realized that even if I couldn't do the poses, I could just breathe — just sit there and connect with my breath. And that's what really changed my life."

DASHED OLYMPIC DREAMS

Soon, Webb had healed enough to start swimming and biking, and a year later, she was able to return to the track. She began to win conference titles in the heptathlon and the high jump and led her team to its first women's track and field championship.

After college, Webb decided she wanted to make a difference and inspire people to live a healthy lifestyle, so she moved to California to chase her Olympic dreams. No one at the Olympic Training Center had ever heard of her, but she managed to secure a coach by promising to "get better every single day." And she did — initially.

"Soon, I was right back in the same position as I was before the injury — worn down and working my butt off," she says. "I was personal training from 5 to 10 a.m. to pay my bills. Then I was on the track from 12 to 3 p.m., and at night, I worked from 5 to 10 to make ends meet. My yoga fell by the wayside." Lo and behold, she pulled a hamstring.

She quickly readopted her practice and healed her injury, but rather than resuming her Olympic training, she had a new goal in mind: being on the cover of *Oxygen* magazine.

> "I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT I HADN'T TAKEN A DEEP BREATH SINCE [THE INJURY] HAPPENED."

MODEL STUDENT

To help realize her goal, Webb started doing some fitness modeling, then on a whim, she decided to enter a bikini competition. "I spent every last dime I had on an outfit and a ticket, flew all the way to Florida and slept in a car because I couldn't afford a hotel," she says. She went onstage and had a blast competing in her division, but little did she know she wasn't done yet. "The organizer mentioned that they didn't have enough entrants in the figure competition and suggested I give it a try," Webb says. "Right then and there, he showed me how to flex, turn and pose — and up I went again!"

Much to her surprise, Webb took first place in both competitions. "They gave me flowers and medals and I was just beaming," she says. "People were congratulating me and asking where my family was. I had to explain that I was here alone, that I felt like my family would have tried to talk me out of it or laugh at me for trying." The show organizer was so moved that he paid for her to have a hotel room and she was finally able to enjoy her victory properly.

GET LOVED UP

Ultimately, Webb decided that physique competitions were not her jam. "Being onstage and comparing myself to other women wasn't actually fun for me," she says. "It was the practice, dedication and [training] consistency that made my heart happy."

Eager to share the transformative power yoga had on her life with others, Webb set out to earn her yoga teacher training certification. "I wanted to go deeper spiritually and share the gift of yoga with the world." Certification in hand, Webb started her own multidisciplinary health and yoga school in 2017 called Get Loved Up.

"I feel like most yoga training leaves the spirituality out and only focuses on the asana, but there is so much more to yoga than poses, so I wanted to blend everything together," she says. "I also wanted to see more black women in front of classes as teachers to bring more diversity to yoga."

Now Webb is giving *Oxygen* readers the chance to get loved up themselves with her new six-week course the Wellness Warrior Workout, which blends all the disciplines Webb knows and loves. "I include my favorite yoga poses and all my favorite things that I do to stay in shape mentally, spiritually and physically — including mindfulness tips," she adds. "The workouts range from 10 to 60 minutes, require no equipment and are great for people at all levels. Plus, I provide delicious plant-based recipes for the nutrition component of the plan. I hope you'll sign up and begin or continue on your journey toward achieving optimal health and wellness."

Q+A

WITH KOYA WEBB

What is your nutrition like these days?

I have been vegan for 15 years, and I follow pretty much the same eating plan each day: A superfood smoothie for breakfast, a huge salad for lunch and a "beauty bowl" for dinner. This includes more complex carbohydrates, veggies and a delicious sauce.

What's your secret food vice?

Pizza! I love California Pizza Kitchen's cauliflower crust pizza, but I also love making my own. I load it with all sorts of vegetables — except onions, I can't stand onions.

Are you a daredevil?

Oh yeah! I've been skydiving and loved it. But I have also been bungee jumping and would not do that again! I tried to go shark cage diving but didn't even get off the boat — not because of the sharks but because I was so disgusted by the bloody, cut-up fish they put in the water to attract them. I curled up in a blanket until the whole thing was over.

What's your favorite vacation spot?

Egypt. I floated in the Red Sea and rode quad bikes through the desert, and my spiritual experiences visiting the temples changed my life forever.

Is there a yoga move you still haven't mastered?

Frog Pose. I have tight hips from track and all those sprints, so I have a long way to go.

What's the craziest thing in your purse right now?

My "happy gun" — you know, one of those hand-held therapeutic massagers. It's so great.

What's one message you want to impart to the people of Earth at this very moment?

You are enough just as you are. You are loved.

> “I FEEL LIKE MOST YOGA LEAVES THE SPIRITUALITY OUT AND ONLY FOCUSES ON THE ASANA, BUT THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO YOGA THAN POSES.”

KILL IT WITH

Get high-impact results with these low-impact workouts using a

BY LARA McGLASHAN, MFA, CPT
PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAN TRAVIS BARNARD

HILIT

barbell, your bodyweight or both.

THE WORLD IS ENAMORED with HIIT — high-intensity interval training — and while research shows that HIIT is super effective for fat burning and performance training, it also can be super high-impact. Explosive moves such as burpees and squat jumps are standard fare in a HIIT workout, but your body can only suffer through so much pounding before your joints and connective tissues give in and break down. Fortunately, a workout does not have to be high-impact to be effective.

Enter HILIT — high-intensity low-impact

training. This specific approach to HIIT uses total-body movements to elevate your heart rate and bring you close to muscle failure, but because you always have one foot and/or hand on the ground, you minimize the amount of load and force of an exercise and will greatly reduce your risk of injury. Like HIIT, HILIT focuses on short bursts of all-out activity followed by short recovery periods, making it a fast and efficient way to train, and because the workouts are joint-friendly, you'll need less downtime to recover, meaning you can get back to the gym faster and more frequently.

These 10 exercises deliver high-impact results at a low-impact price using either your bodyweight or a barbell and are arranged in pairs that engage the same general muscle groups. Plug them into your current routine, or trade your regular HIIT workouts for one of the sample plans for a body-friendly change of pace.

SAMPLE WORKOUT 1

Total-Body Bodyweight Workout

Complete three rounds of the following workout. Rest 60 seconds between rounds.

Exercise	**Seconds**
Touchdown/Reach-Back Squat	30
Rest	*15*
Alternating Prisoner Curtsy Squat	30
Rest	*15*
Push-Up to Chair Squat	30
Rest	*15*
Plank Thigh Tap to Side-Plank Reach to Lateral Walk	30
Rest	*15*
Russian Twist	30
Rest	*60*

SAMPLE WORKOUT 2

Lower-Body Barbell Blast

Complete four rounds of the following workout, resting 60 seconds between rounds, then rest two minutes before completing the finisher.

Exercise	**Seconds**
Squat-Press Barbell Complex	30
Rest	*15*
Walking Lunge	30
Rest	*15*
Overhead Barbell Curtsy Squat (left)	30
Rest	*15*
Overhead Barbell Curtsy Squat (right)	30
Rest	*15*
Air Squat	30
Rest	*60*

Finisher: 100's

Start a timer, then complete 100 reps of the following exercise, resting only as needed.

- Barbell Landmine Rainbow

SAMPLE WORKOUT 3

Bar/Body HILIT Burnout

Complete two to three rounds of each circuit. Rest 30 seconds between rounds.

CIRCUIT 1

Exercise	**Seconds**
Squat-Press Barbell Complex	20
Rest	*10*
Touchdown/Reach-Back Squat	20
Rest	*10*
Alternating Overhead Barbell Curtsy Squat	20
Rest	*10*
Alternating Prisoner Curtsy Squat	20
Rest	*30*

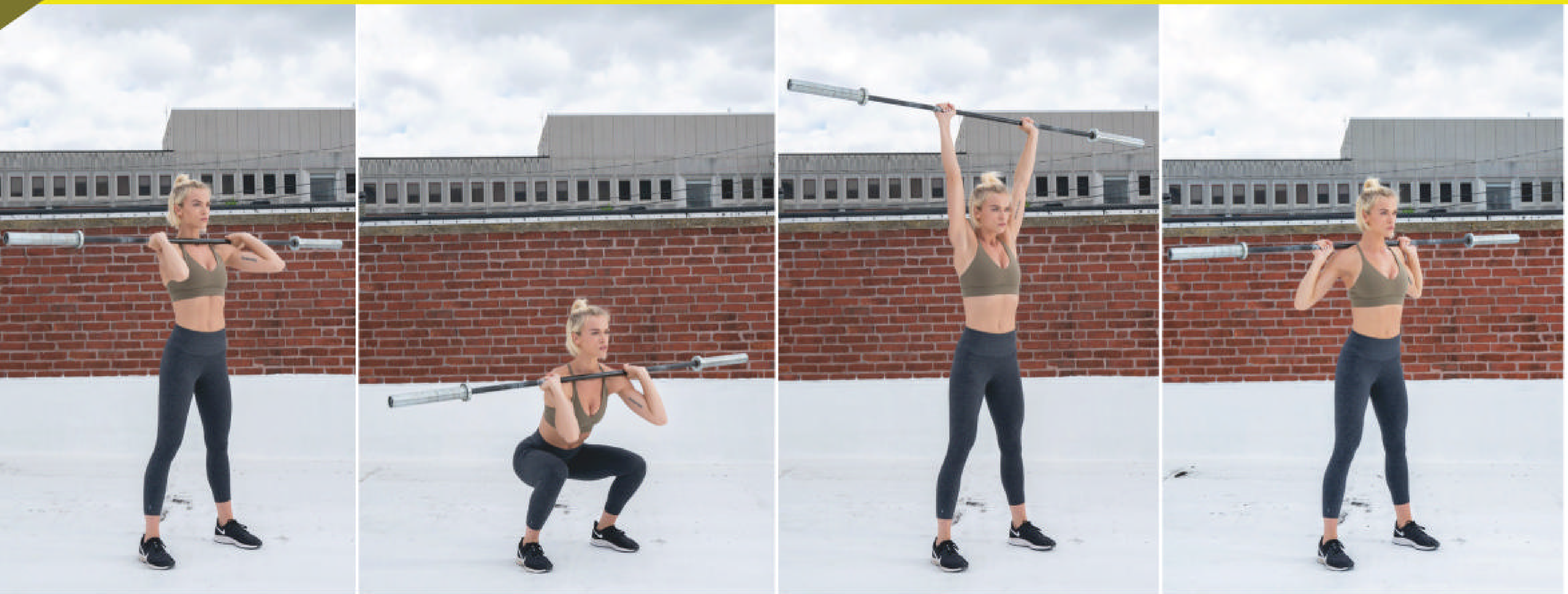
CIRCUIT 2

Exercise	**Seconds**
Barbell Push-Up to Pendlay Row	20
Rest	*10*
Push-Up to Chair Squat	20
Rest	*10*
Barbell Landmine Rainbow	20
Rest	*30*

CIRCUIT 3

Exercise	**Seconds**
Renegade Barbell Row to Side-Plank Reach to Walkover	20
Rest	*10*
Russian Twist	20
Rest	*10*
Plank Thigh Tap to Side-Plank Reach to Lateral Walk	20
Rest	*30*

A 2019 report published in *The Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness* revealed that the number of HIIT-related injuries increased by 144 percent between 2012 and 2016!



SQUAT-PRESS BARBELL COMPLEX

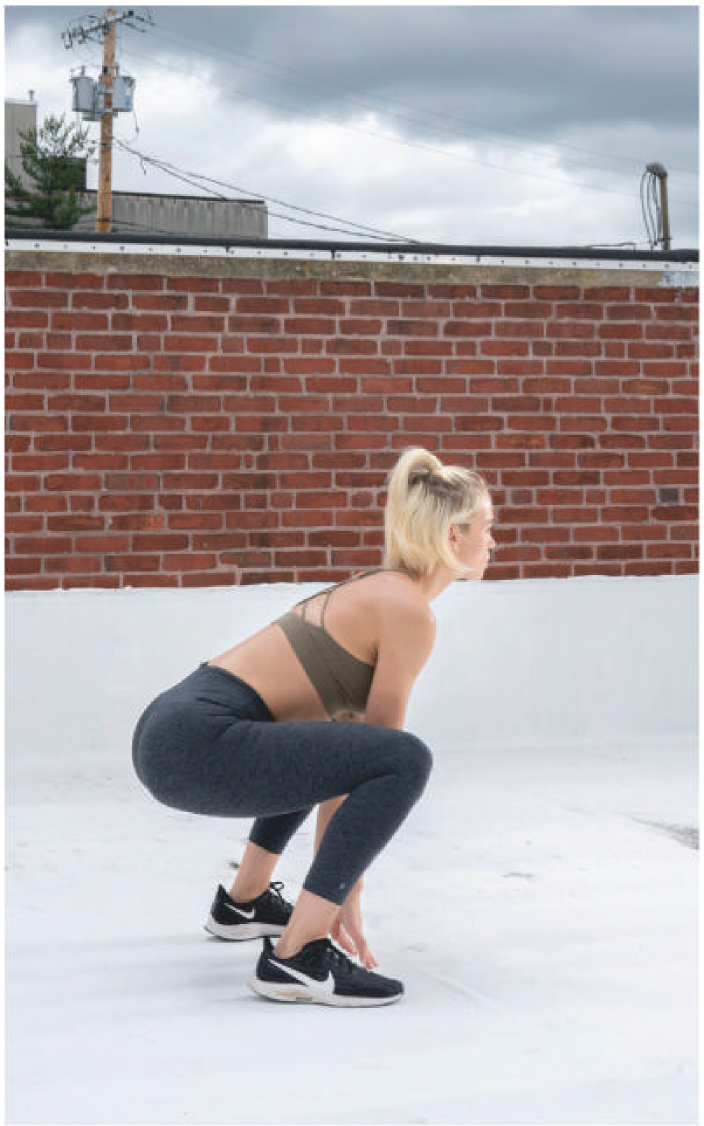
▸ Stand with your feet about shoulder-width apart and your legs turned out slightly. Hold a barbell across your clavicle and front delts in the front rack position with your hands outside your shoulders and your elbows flipped underneath the bar and raised to shoulder height. Kick your hips back, bend your knees and drop your glutes to squat down as low as you comfortably can. Drive through your heels, quickly extending your legs and hips, and use that momentum to drive the bar straight up overhead. Carefully lower the bar behind your head across your upper back, then descend into another deep squat. Explode back to standing, push the bar overhead, then return it to the front rack position to complete one rep.

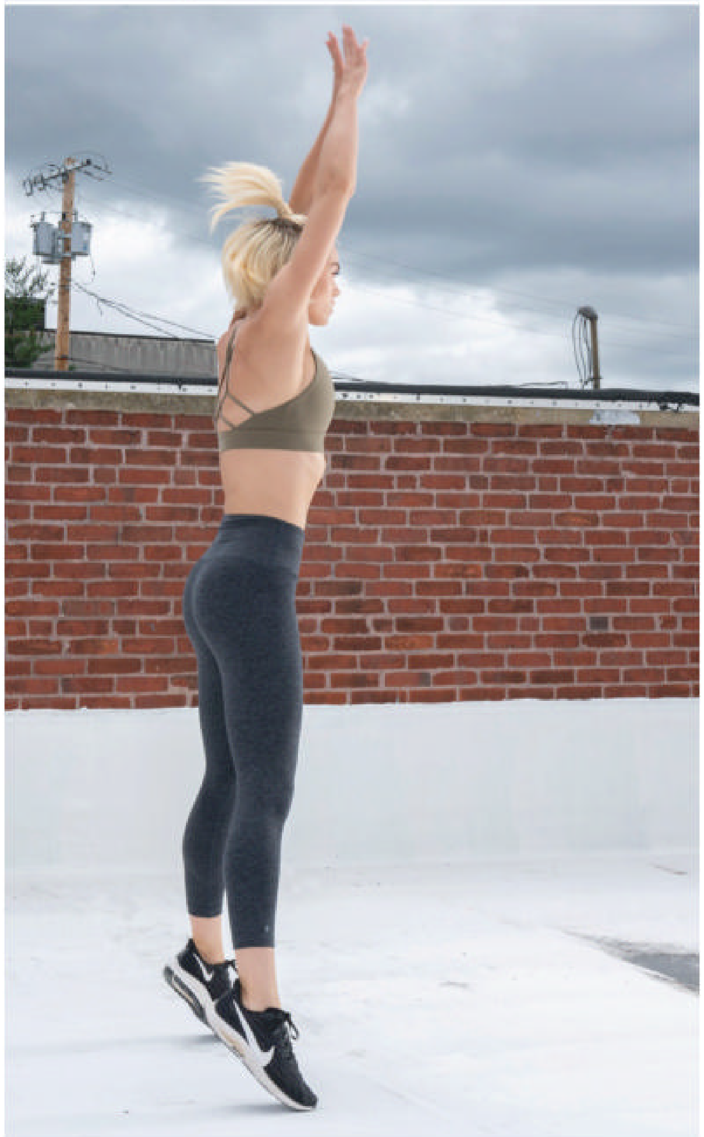
TIP: Remember to breathe, inhaling as you squat down and exhaling as you drive up.

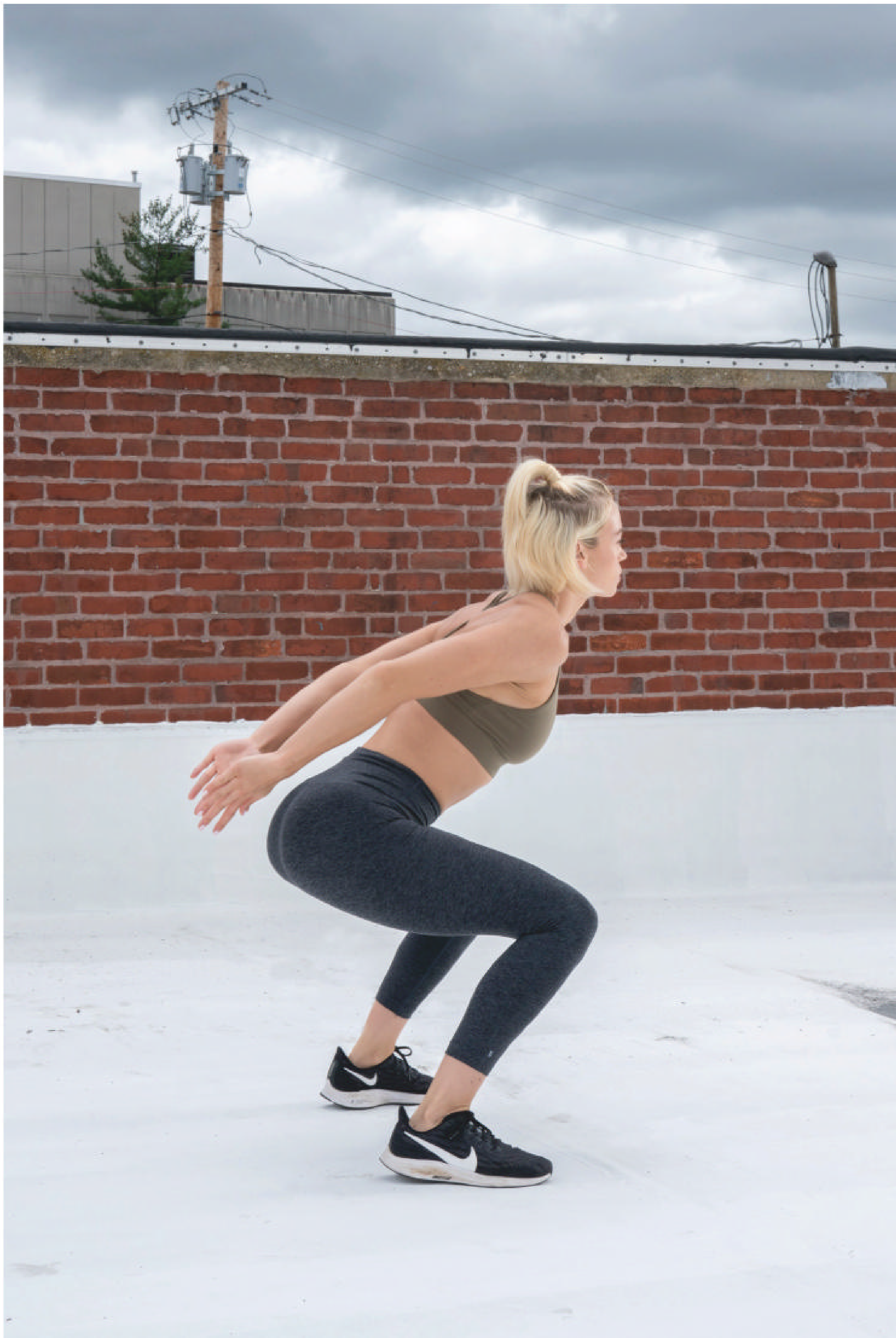
TOUCHDOWN/REACH-BACK SQUAT

▸ Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, legs turned out slightly from your hips. Push your glutes back and bend your knees to squat as low as you can while keeping your spine straight. Touch the floor between your feet, then quickly stand up, extending your knees, hips and ankles and rising up onto your toes as you reach your arms overhead. Lower right into another squat, and at the bottom, reach your arms behind your lower back and try to touch your fingertips together. Stand up onto your toes and reach your arms overhead to complete one rep.

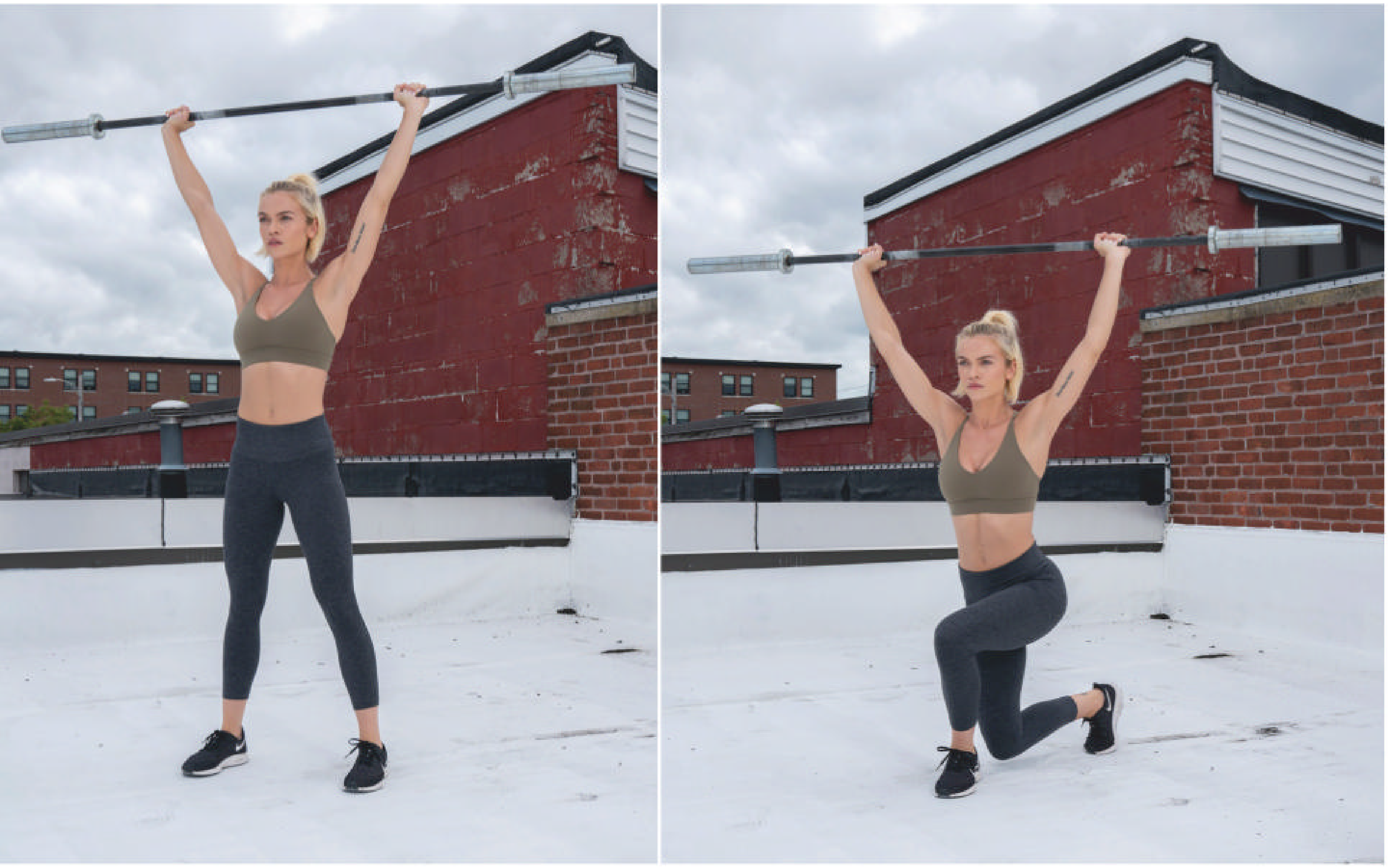
TIP: When reaching behind you, keep your chest lifted and your head in line with your spine to maintain balance and prevent back strain.







Model: Paige Munroe / Makeup: Bianca Corso / Pants: Nobull / Top: Lorna Jane / Shoes: Nike



OVERHEAD BARBELL CURTSY SQUAT

Take a wide, overhand grip on a barbell and lift it straight up over your head. Keeping your hips square, step your right foot behind and across your body to the left on the diagonal. Bend both knees and lower into a curtsy, then push off your right foot as you extend your left leg to return to the start.

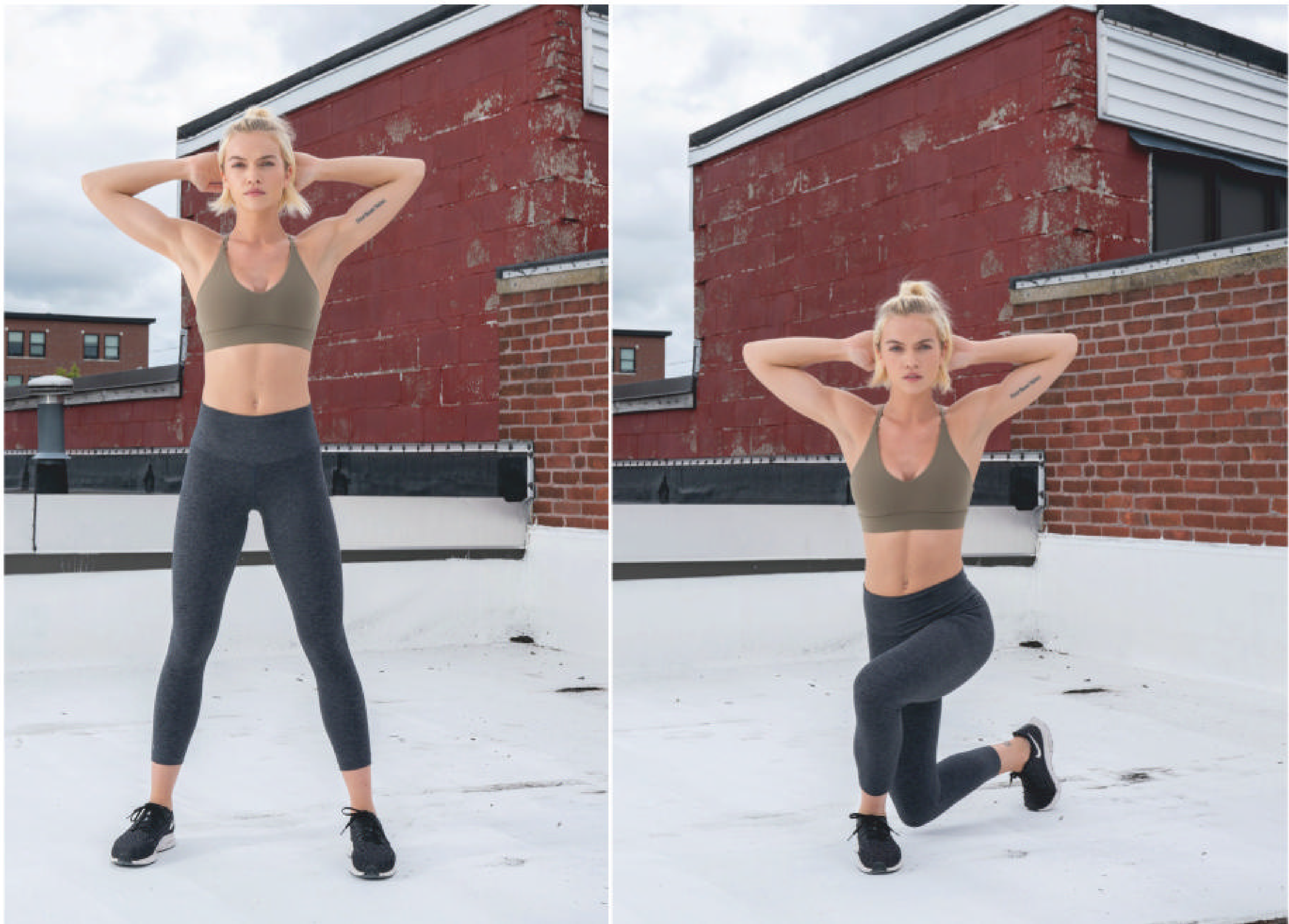
TIP: Think about turning your armpits to the front as you actively press up against the bar for optimal shoulder stabilization.

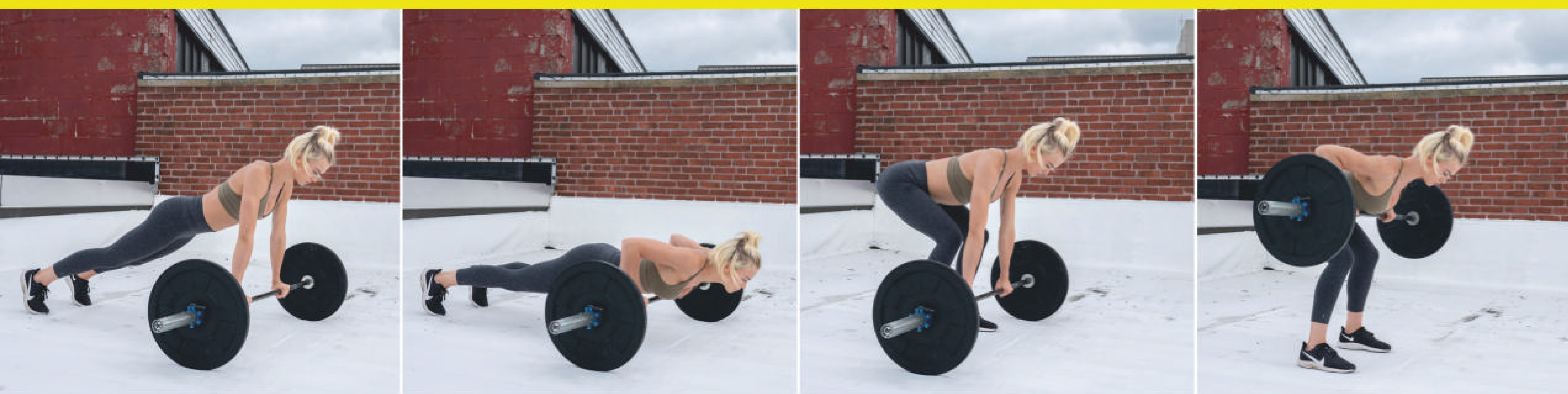
Holding a barbell overhead engages tons of additional core and upper-body muscles to help stabilize the load. But if you have an injury or are simply not comfortable with an overhead position, you can perform this move with the bar in the front rack or back rack position instead.

PRISONER CURTSY SQUAT

Stand with your feet hip-width apart and place your hands lightly behind your head with your elbows flared and your chest lifted. Keeping your hips square, step your right foot behind and across your left on the diagonal. Bend both knees and lower into a curtsy, then push off your right foot as you extend your left leg to return to the start.

TIP: Overstepping to the side causes your hips to turn, so keep your curtsys smaller to properly target the glutes and outer thigh.

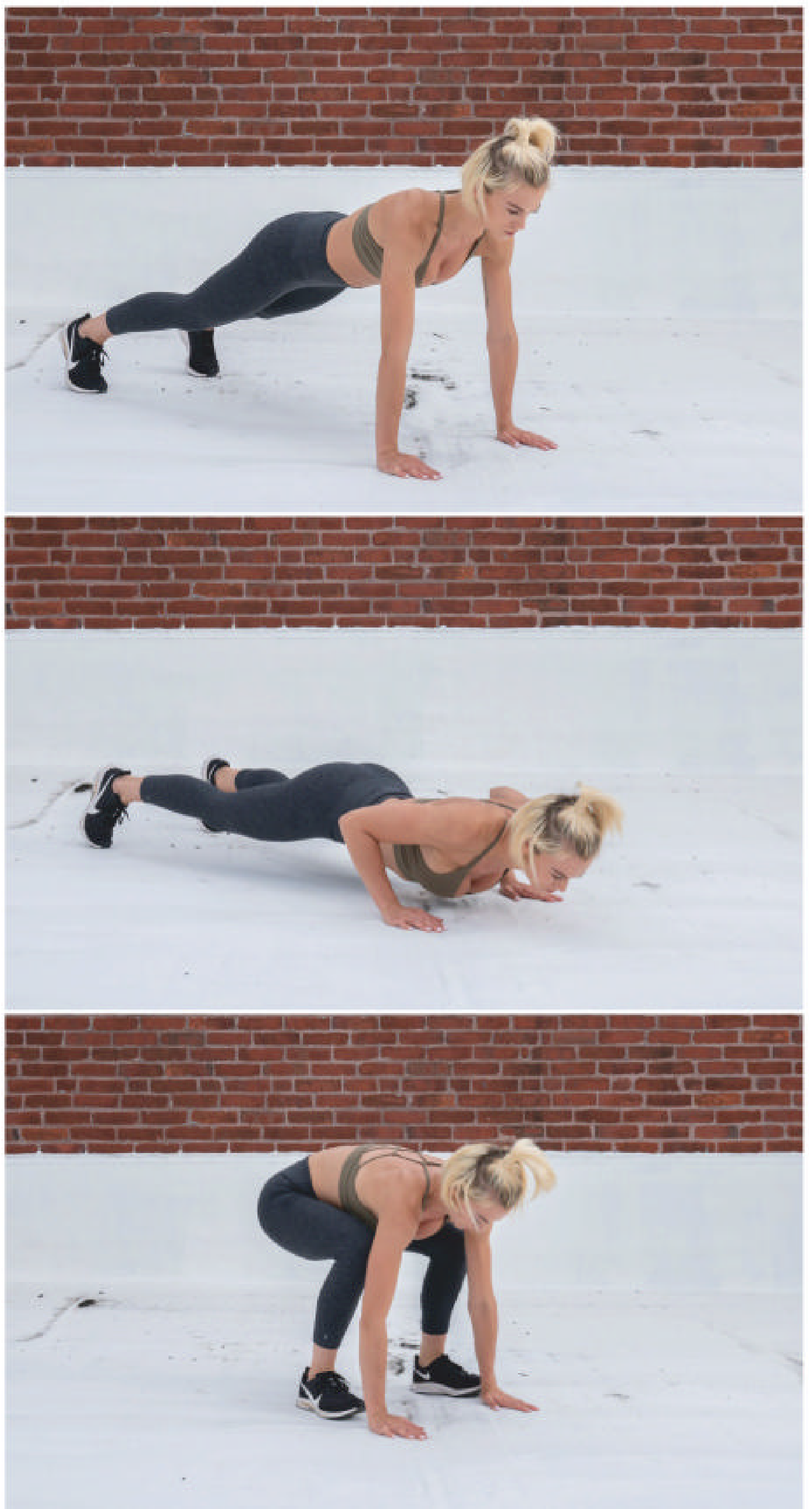


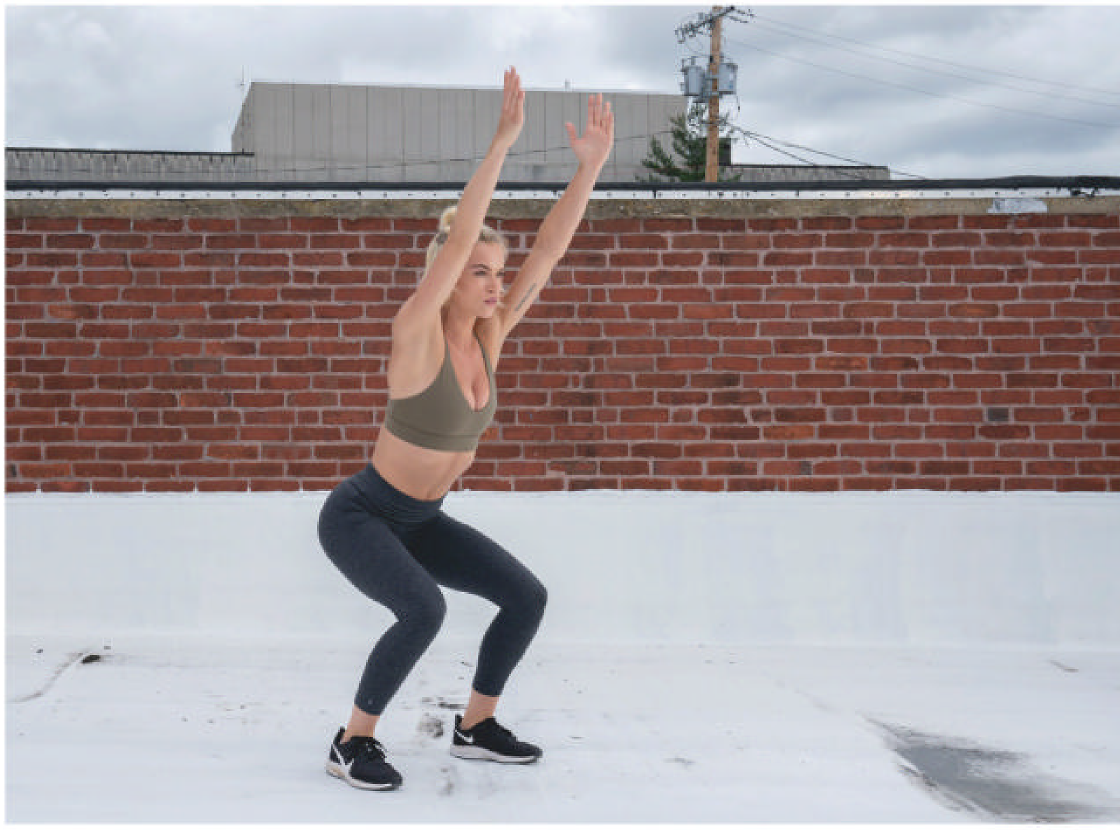


BARBELL PUSH-UP TO PENDLAY ROW

Kneel on the floor and place your hands shoulder-width apart on a barbell. Walk your feet back into a plank so your head, hips and heels align and your arms are perpendicular to the floor. Bend your elbows and lower your body until your chest almost touches the barbell, then extend your arms to return to plank. Walk your feet underneath you, bend your knees and drop your hips slightly until your back is parallel with the ground. Hold here as you drive your elbows up and back to pull the bar off the floor and into your abdomen. Return it to the floor, step your feet back into plank and repeat.

TIP: Unlike a typical row, your back should stay parallel to the ground throughout the move and the barbell should begin and end on the floor with each rep.

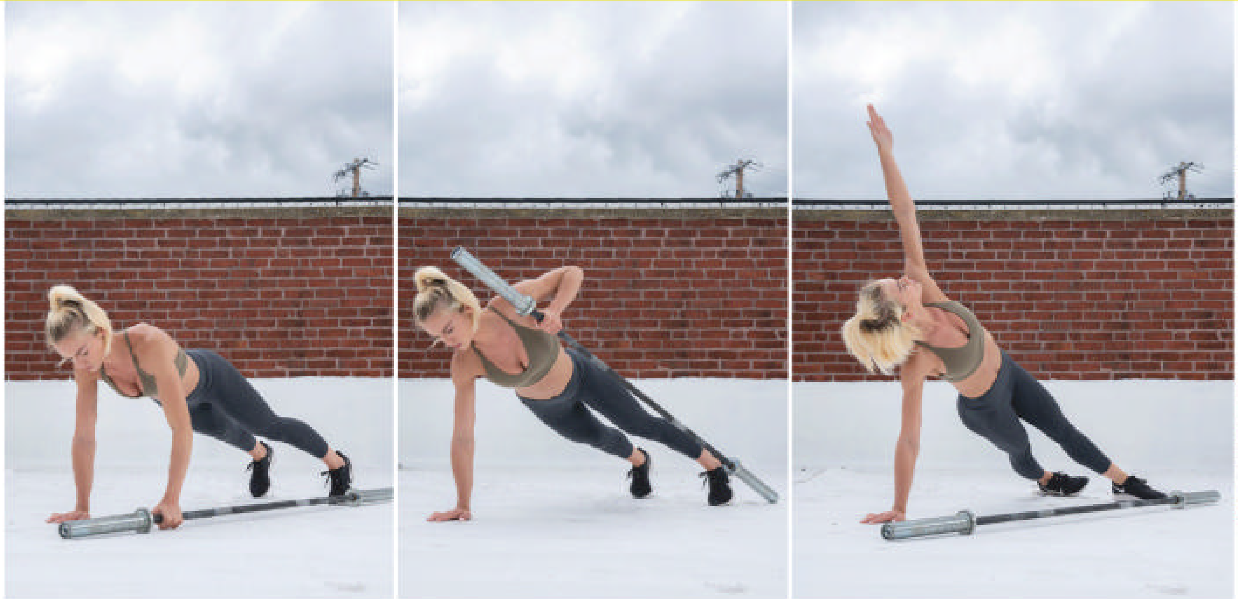




PUSH-UP TO CHAIR SQUAT

Place your hands on the floor just outside your shoulders and step your feet back into plank so your head, hips and heels align. Do a push-up, then walk your feet underneath you about hip-width apart. Keep your back straight as you bend your knees, drop your hips and reach your arms overhead in a smooth arc. Hold briefly, then reverse the steps to return to the start.

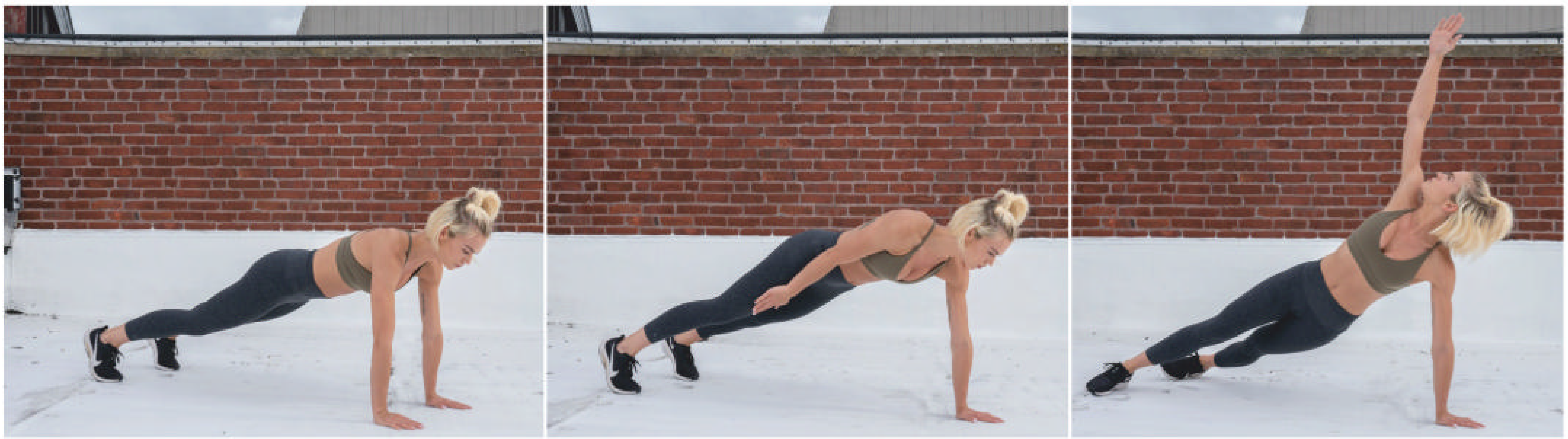
TIP: Actively draw your shoulder blades together and pull your raised arms behind you to align with your ears to engage your entire back.



RENEGADE BARBELL ROW TO SIDE-PLANK REACH TO WALKOVER

▸ Get into plank with a barbell positioned on your left, making sure your head, hips and heels are aligned. Grasp the bar with your left hand and drive your elbow up and back to row it toward your flank. Return the bar to the floor, pivot on your feet and open your body to the left, reaching your arm toward the sky. Return to plank, then walk laterally on your hands and toes to over the barbell and repeat on the other side.

TIP: For better stability, spread your feet a little wider apart.



PLANK THIGH TAP TO SIDE-PLANK REACH TO LATERAL WALK

▸ Get into plank with your hands underneath your shoulders and your head, hips and heels aligned. Hold plank as you reach one hand at a time underneath you to tap your thighs. Then pivot on your feet and open your body to the right, reaching your right arm up toward the sky. Return to plank, then take two lateral "steps" to the right with your hands and feet and then repeat on the other side.

TIP: If your form begins to fail and/or your back begins to sway, take a break and regroup to prevent a lumbar issue.

BARBELL LANDMINE RAINBOW

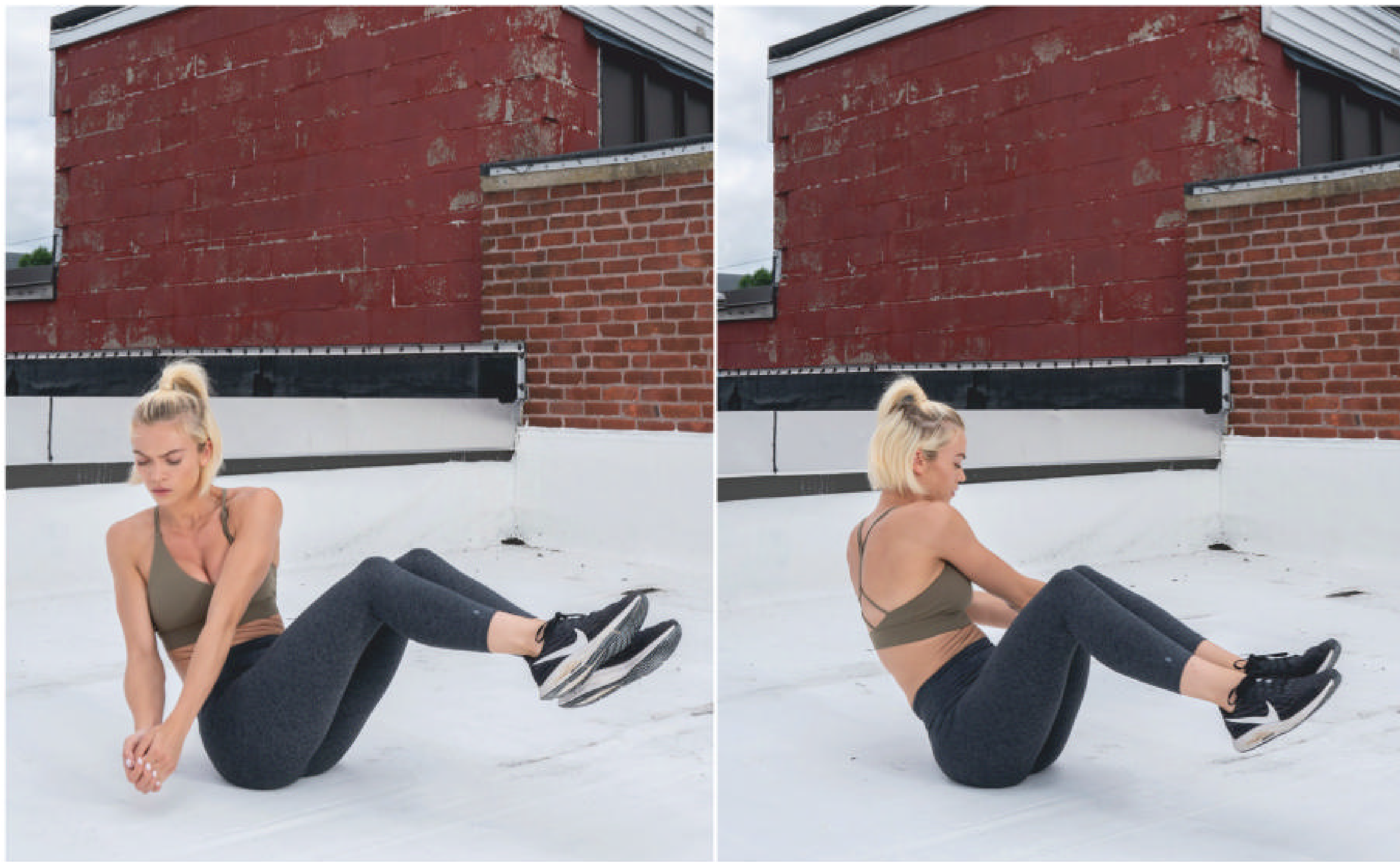
▸ Position one end of a barbell in the center of a plate or in the corner of a room. Hold the opposite end with both hands at your right hip and stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees bent slightly. Keep your hips and shoulders as square as possible as you raise the bar up and over to the left in a big arc. Continue, alternating sides.

TIP: This movement trains your core in anti-rotation, meaning you're going to want to resist movement as you move the bar side to side. It's harder than it looks!

RUSSIAN TWIST

▸ Sit with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Clasp your hands together and lean away from your legs with your back straight. Twist your entire upper body and shoulders side to side, tapping your knuckles to the floor outside your hips.

TIP: To make this more challenging, lift your feet off the floor and balance on your tailbone (as shown).



stop what you're doing.

QUIT MOVING! (AT LEAST FOR A MOMENT) TO EXPERIENCE THE UPSIDE OF ISOMETRICS.

Working out is all about motion — we run, we jump, we push, we pull, we lift. But dynamic training is not the only way to get results, and sometimes coming to a dead stop is exactly what you need to move ahead.

By Michael Berg, NSCA-CPT / Photography by Ian Travis Barnard

Freeze frame

If you've ever held a plank or struck a pose in yoga class, you've done an isometric exercise — a move in which you're holding a fixed position against resistance. But most people don't consider isometrics to be as effective as traditional isotonic (dynamic) training, in which you're contracting or extending a muscle against resistance — but they could not be more wrong.

Science is on board with isometrics as a training modality, and proven benefits include increased muscular strength, better athletic performance, enhanced neuromuscular efficiency, and improved tendon and joint stability. What's more, isometrics rarely trigger delayed onset muscle soreness like traditional isotonic movements, meaning you can recover faster and get to the gym more often.

Pause with a cause

There are four main styles of isometric training to choose from, which are listed below in increasing order of difficulty:

Sensory isometrics involve holding a contraction using light resistance to improve neural connections without fatigue, helping improve speed and prevent strength imbalances.

Yielding isometrics require you to hold a contraction for a set length of time with submaximal weight, usually in a position of weakness in a movement, such as at the bottom of a squat or a few inches above your chest in a bench press. This causes the tendons attached to the target muscles to "creep" — e.g., expand and lengthen in a controlled and careful manner — under that load.

Non-yielding (aka overcoming) isometrics involve pushing or pulling as hard as you can on or against an immovable object, such as pushing against a wall or pulling on a rope wrapped around a fixed pole.

Oscillatory isometrics are a very advanced iteration in which you perform a static hold using the target muscle(s), then follow with a full release of tension while moving within a small 3- to 5-inch range. This trains your opposing muscle groups to work in concert, for example your quads flexing while your hamstrings relax.

Arrested development

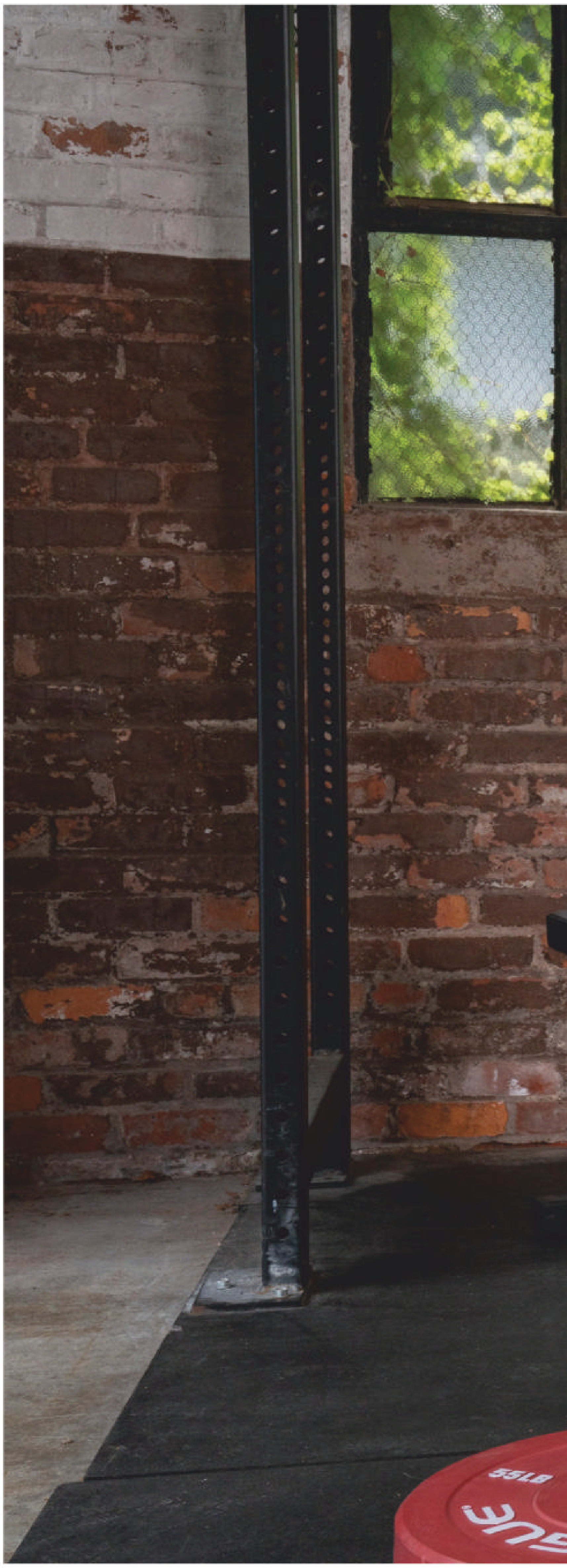
The kind of isometrics you choose to implement depends on your goals. "Sensory isometrics using light bands is a great starting point," says Hannah Eden, co-owner of PumpFit Club in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and founder and CEO of Hannah Eden Fitness and Serene Soldier Inc. "They are extremely basic and are a great way to start connecting the mind with the body."

On the other hand, if you're looking for muscle growth, you might want to try yielding isometrics. "Here, exercises are performed with 70 to 80 percent of your one-rep max," Eden says. "You're fighting against gravity, resisting elongation of the targeted muscle … for 20 or more seconds. This floods the area with blood and muscle-building metabolites, providing stimulus for growth."

Strength workouts aren't the only aspect of fitness that can benefit from isometrics. "Cardio activities involve repetitive movements, sometimes with higher impact, and cross-training with isometrics builds strength in a low-impact and controlled way," says Jess Sims, NASM-CPT, Peloton Tread instructor based in New York. "They can also help with rehabbing injuries because you're not changing your joint or muscle positioning."

"Adding isometrics into my athletes' programming at least once per workout has been a huge game changer in terms of being more explosive," adds strength and performance coach Matthew Pendola, EXOS performance specialist and owner of Pendola Training in Reno, Nevada.

Ready to give isometrics a whirl? Try these expert-designed variations on seven popular exercises and prepare to move less — and gain more.



ROGUE
45LB
ROGUE
45LB
ROGUE
ROGUE

SCIENCE SAYS

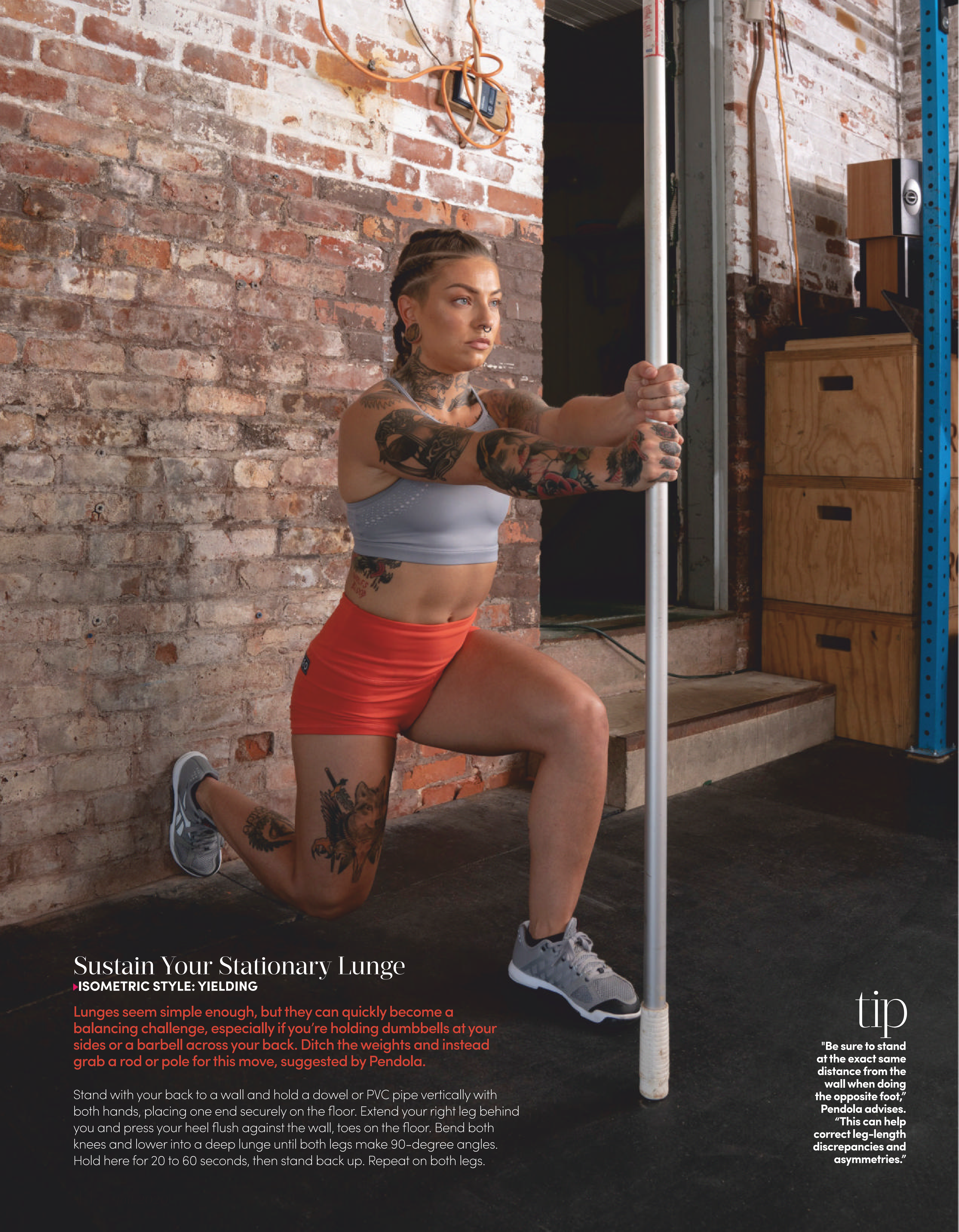
The guys in the white lab coats have a few things to say about the benefits of isometrics.

They recruit more muscle fibers: A study published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology* found that isometric training recruits more than 95 percent of the motor units in a working muscle group versus only 88 percent in a traditional isotonic (dynamic) movement.

The benefits aren't angle-specific: Isometrics actually translate throughout a muscle group, according to researchers in Japan: Subjects performed plantar flexion resistance isometrics three days a week for four weeks at just one angle (20 degrees). However, they saw strength gains at multiple angles that were not trained.

A little goes a long way: A study published in *The Journal of Applied Research* showed that a seven-minute isometric routine led to a 20 percent strength increase in just one month.

They make your heart happy: A 2014 meta-analysis of research published in *Mayo Clinic Proceedings* concluded that isometric resistance training lowers systolic and diastolic blood pressure significantly more than aerobic or resistance training.



Sustain Your Stationary Lunge

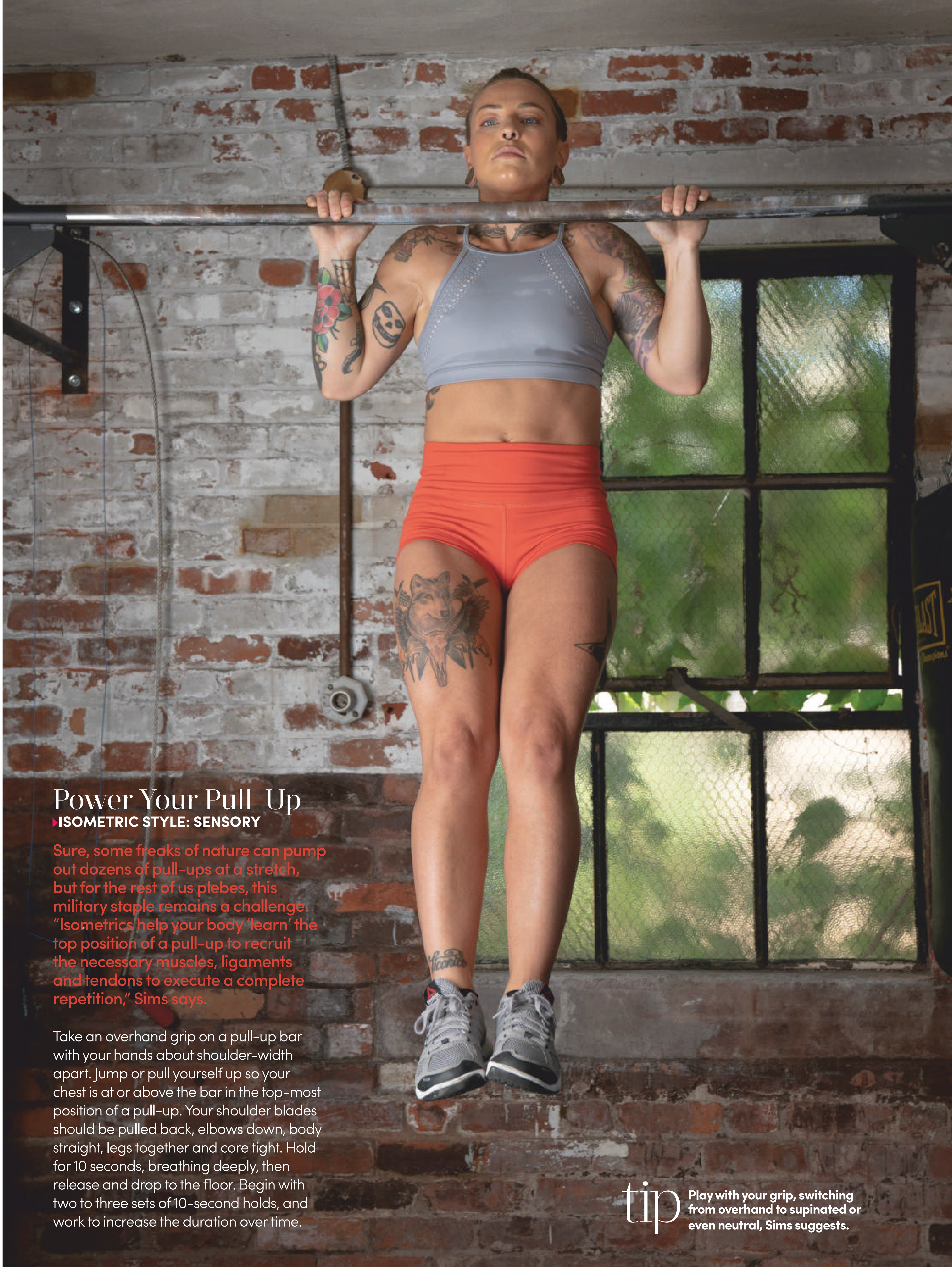
ISOMETRIC STYLE: YIELDING

Lunges seem simple enough, but they can quickly become a balancing challenge, especially if you're holding dumbbells at your sides or a barbell across your back. Ditch the weights and instead grab a rod or pole for this move, suggested by Pendola.

Stand with your back to a wall and hold a dowel or PVC pipe vertically with both hands, placing one end securely on the floor. Extend your right leg behind you and press your heel flush against the wall, toes on the floor. Bend both knees and lower into a deep lunge until both legs make 90-degree angles. Hold here for 20 to 60 seconds, then stand back up. Repeat on both legs.

tip

"Be sure to stand at the exact same distance from the wall when doing the opposite foot," Pendola advises. "This can help correct leg-length discrepancies and asymmetries."



Power Your Pull-Up

ISOMETRIC STYLE: SENSORY

Sure, some freaks of nature can pump out dozens of pull-ups at a stretch, but for the rest of us plebes, this military staple remains a challenge. "Isometrics help your body 'learn' the top position of a pull-up to recruit the necessary muscles, ligaments and tendons to execute a complete repetition," Sims says.

Take an overhand grip on a pull-up bar with your hands about shoulder-width apart. Jump or pull yourself up so your chest is at or above the bar in the top-most position of a pull-up. Your shoulder blades should be pulled back, elbows down, body straight, legs together and core tight. Hold for 10 seconds, breathing deeply, then release and drop to the floor. Begin with two to three sets of 10-second holds, and work to increase the duration over time.

tip **Play with your grip, switching from overhand to supinated or even neutral, Sims suggests.**

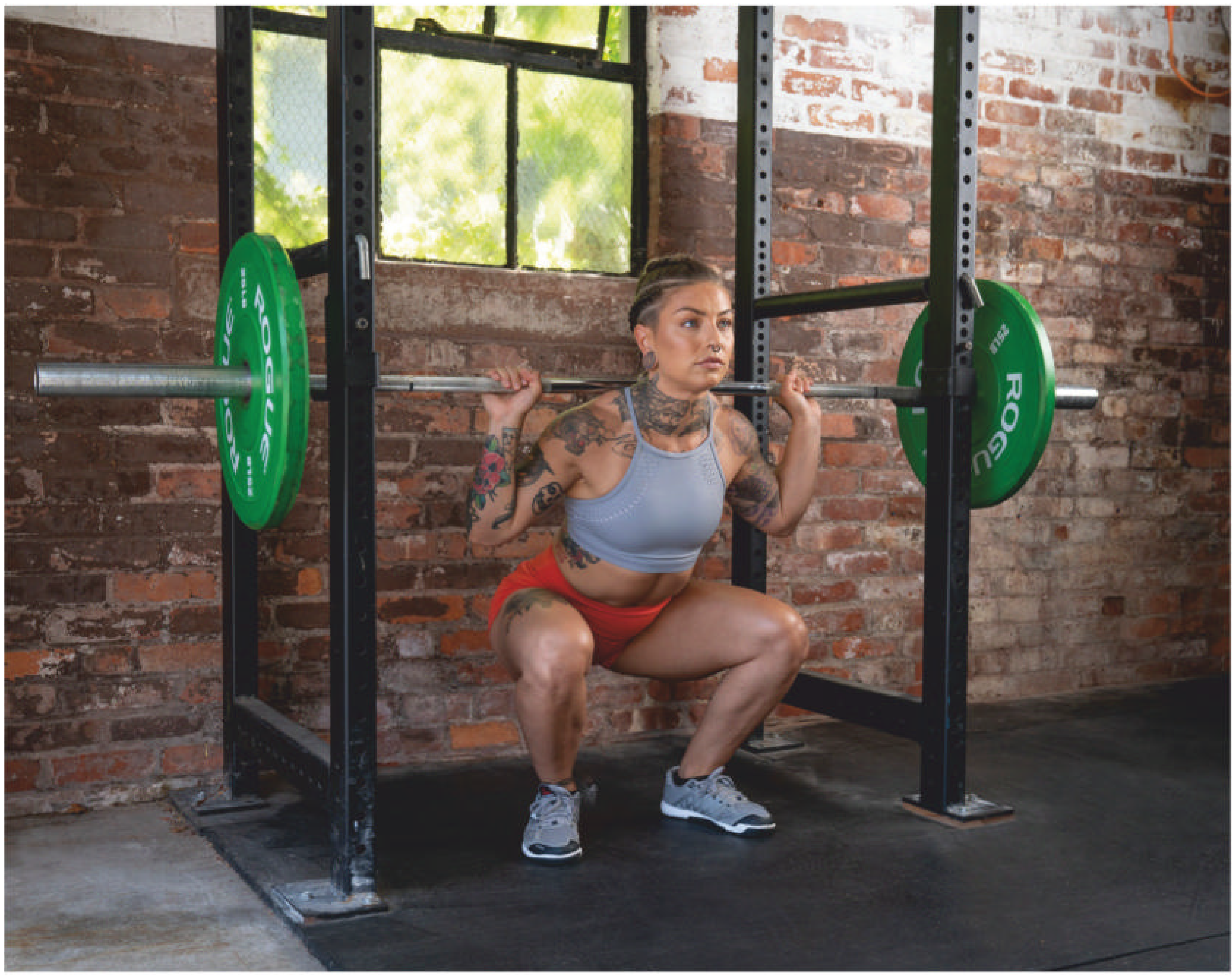
Model: Lindsay Broekel / Makeup: Bianca Corso / Hair: Jill Kashgagian / Top: Victoria's Secret / Shorts: Fleo / Shoes: Model's Own

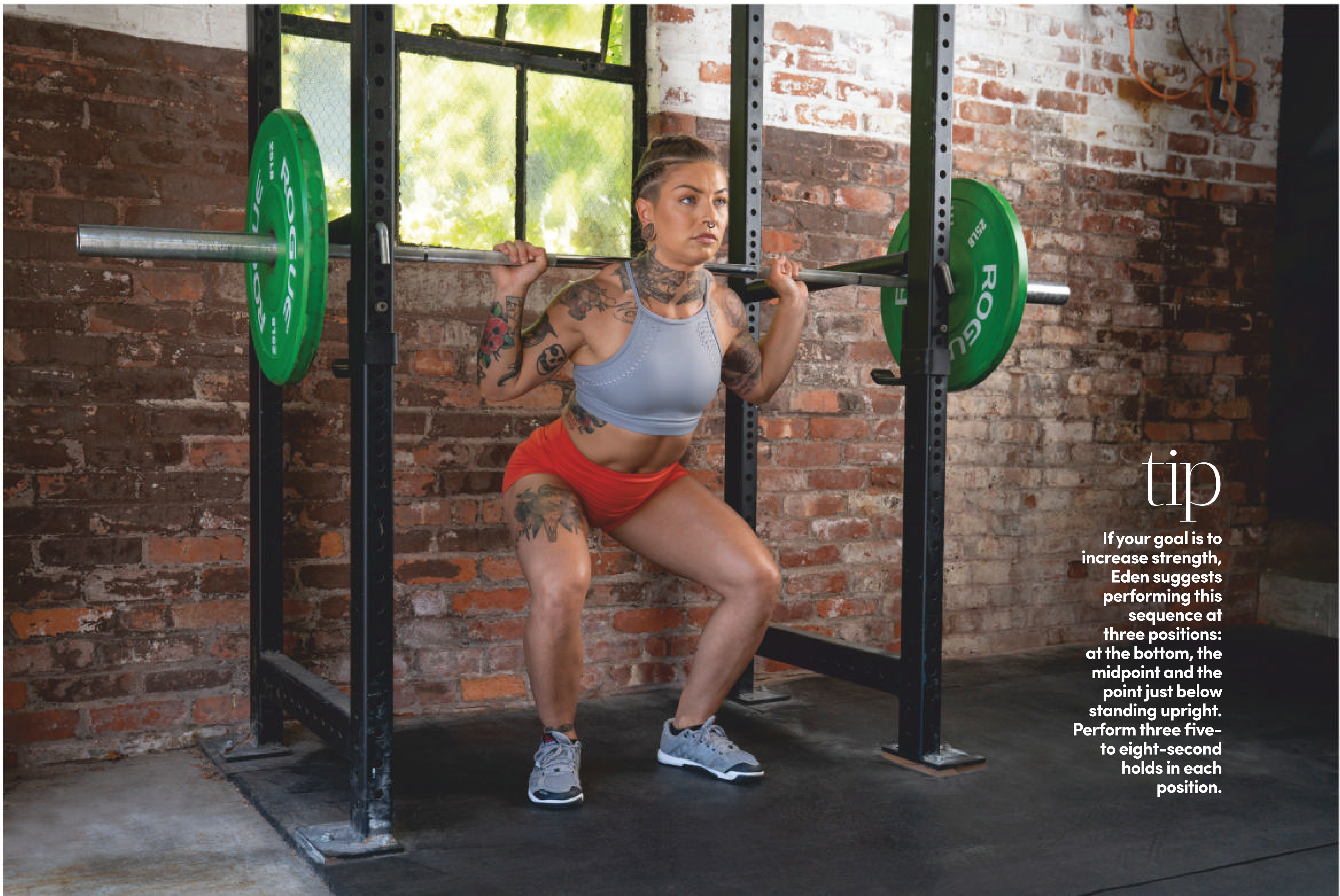
Strengthen Your Back Squat

▸ISOMETRIC STYLE: NON-YIELDING

Isometrics can help you overcome your strength sticking points, such as driving out of the hole in a squat. Practicing static holds in the bottommost position under load can incite neuromuscular adaptations and translate to a stronger concentric upward drive. This move, recommended by Eden, requires a barbell, a power rack and two sets of pins — or one set of pins and two J-hooks, as shown.

Set the J-hooks and the barbell at the height of your typical squat sticking point. Set the pins above the hooks in the next hole or two up. Assume your squat position under the bar with your feet shoulder-width apart and turned out slightly, hips low and back straight. Actively drive the bar upward against the pins with max force for five to eight seconds. Rest 30 to 60 seconds before repeating.





tip

If your goal is to increase strength, Eden suggests performing this sequence at three positions: at the bottom, the midpoint and the point just below standing upright. Perform three five- to eight-second holds in each position.

ROGUE
25LB
ROGUE

tip

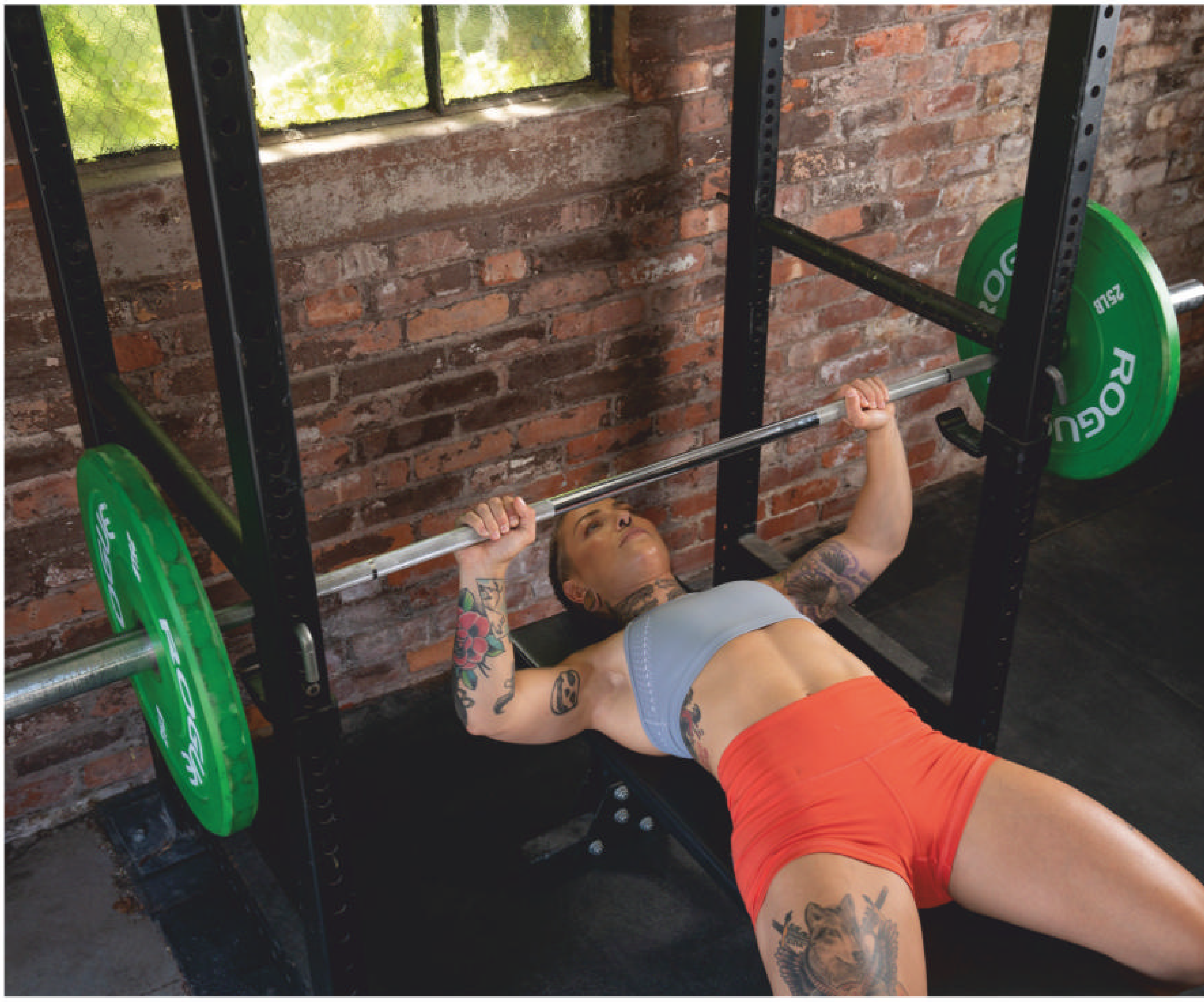
For a change of pace, or to hit your muscles from new angles, use an incline or a decline bench.

Boost Your Bench Press

ISOMETRIC STYLE: NON-YIELDING

The same trick Eden suggests for the squat works for the bench press, leveraging non-yielding isometrics to target your sticking point. "I recommend doing isometrics before your actual chest training or on a separate day so you're able to implement maximum force without being overly fatigued," Eden says.

Place a flat bench inside a power rack and position a set of J-hooks and the barbell at your sticking point. Set the pins in the next hole up and lie faceup on the bench with your feet flat on the floor. Take a wide overhand grasp on the bar and drive it upward against the pins with maximum force. Perform three sets of five- to eight-second holds, resting at least 30 seconds in between.

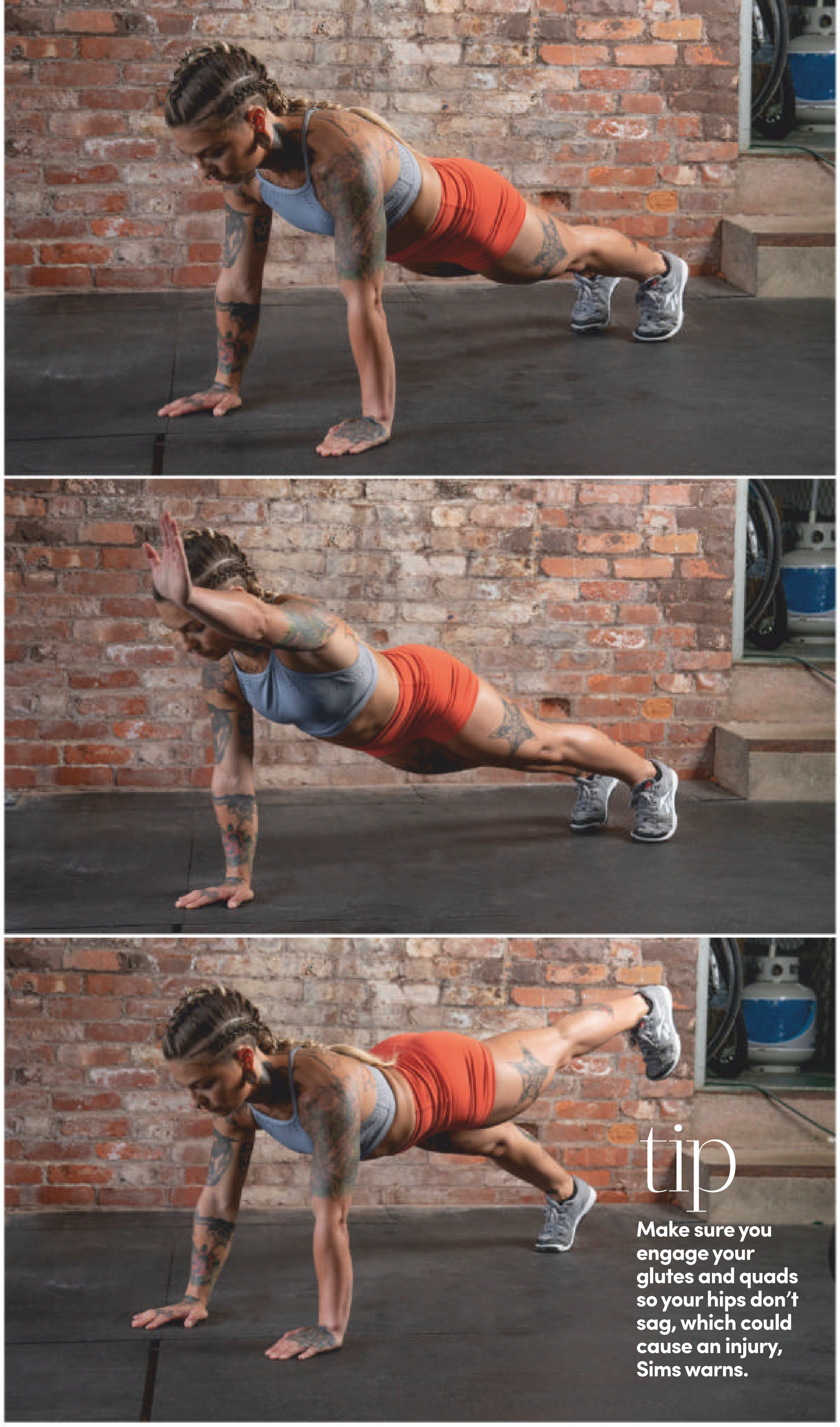


Perfect Your Plank

▸ISOMETRIC STYLE: SENSORY

Love 'em or hate 'em, planks are a core staple, developing strength and stability in your abs, hips, glutes and shoulders. But as you improve, you will want to implement variations such as this one, suggested by Pendola, to keep progressing.

Get into a plank with your hands directly underneath your shoulders and your legs extended behind you so your head, hips and heels align. Hold here and create tension by "pulling" your feet toward your elbows and vice versa — without actually moving — for 30 to 60 seconds. Then lift one limb at a time parallel to the floor and hold it there for 10 to 30 seconds.



tip

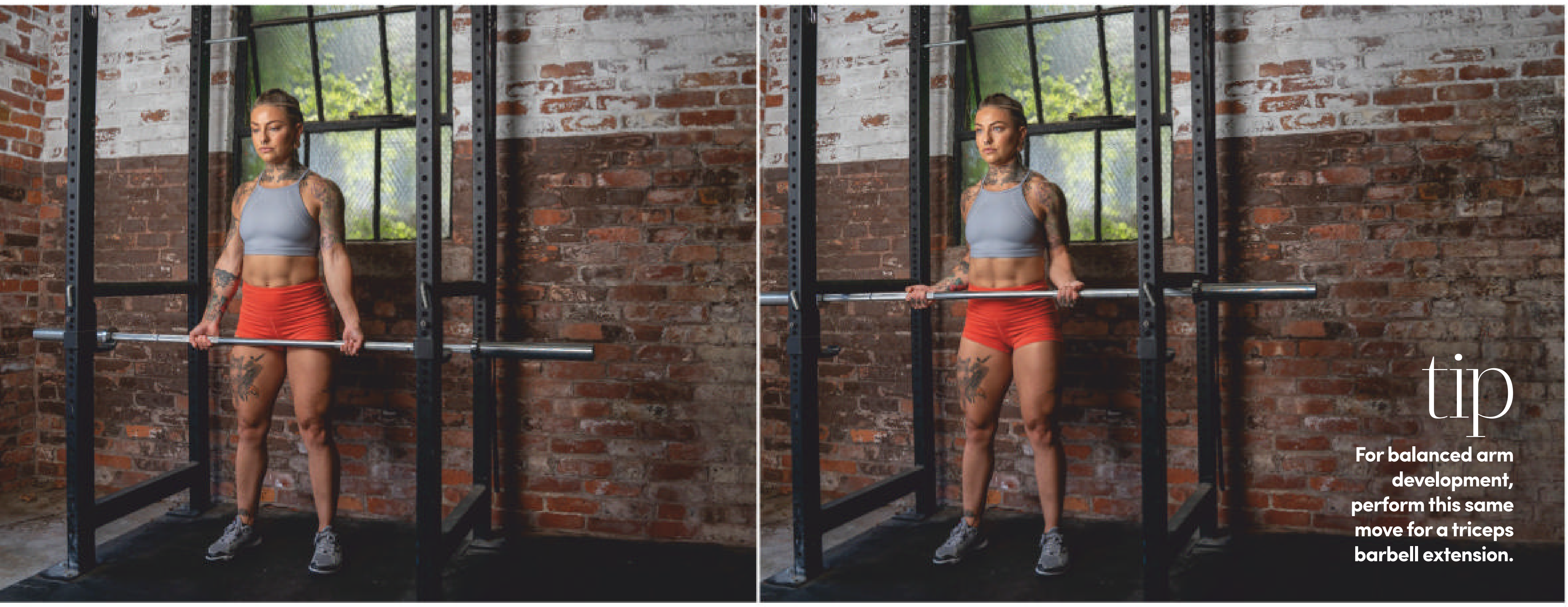
Make sure you engage your glutes and quads so your hips don't sag, which could cause an injury, Sims warns.

Crank Up Your Curl

▸ISOMETRIC STYLE: NON-YIELDING

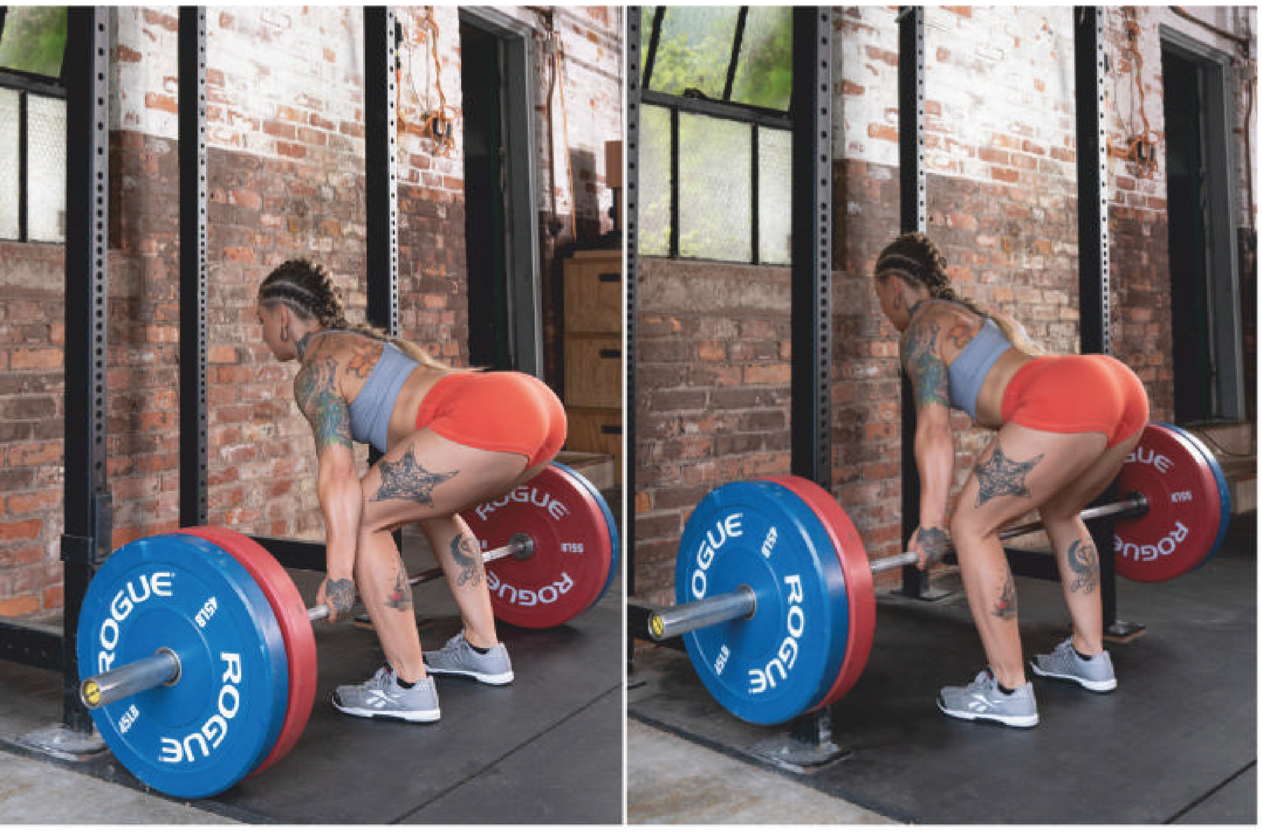
Nothing beats a barbell curl for full biceps stimulation. "Do this move before your regular sets of curls to warm up the muscles and stimulate them at that common sticking point," Pendola says.

Set the pins an inch or so below the level when your forearms come parallel with the floor. Grasp a barbell with a shoulder-width grip and keep your arms pinned to your sides as you drive the bar up against the pins at max effort for five to 10 seconds. Rest 20 to 30 seconds, then repeat.



tip

For balanced arm development, perform this same move for a triceps barbell extension.



DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH

Yes, with isometrics, you should hold your position — but not your breath. "Since there's no actual movement being produced, sometimes we forget to breathe," Sims says. "Breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth for the entire duration of the hold."

"Perform deep, diaphragmic breaths and focus on expanding your 'inner balloon,'" Pendola adds. "This translates to better control during regular heavy lifts, and you'll have a much stronger core once you have better control of your breathing."

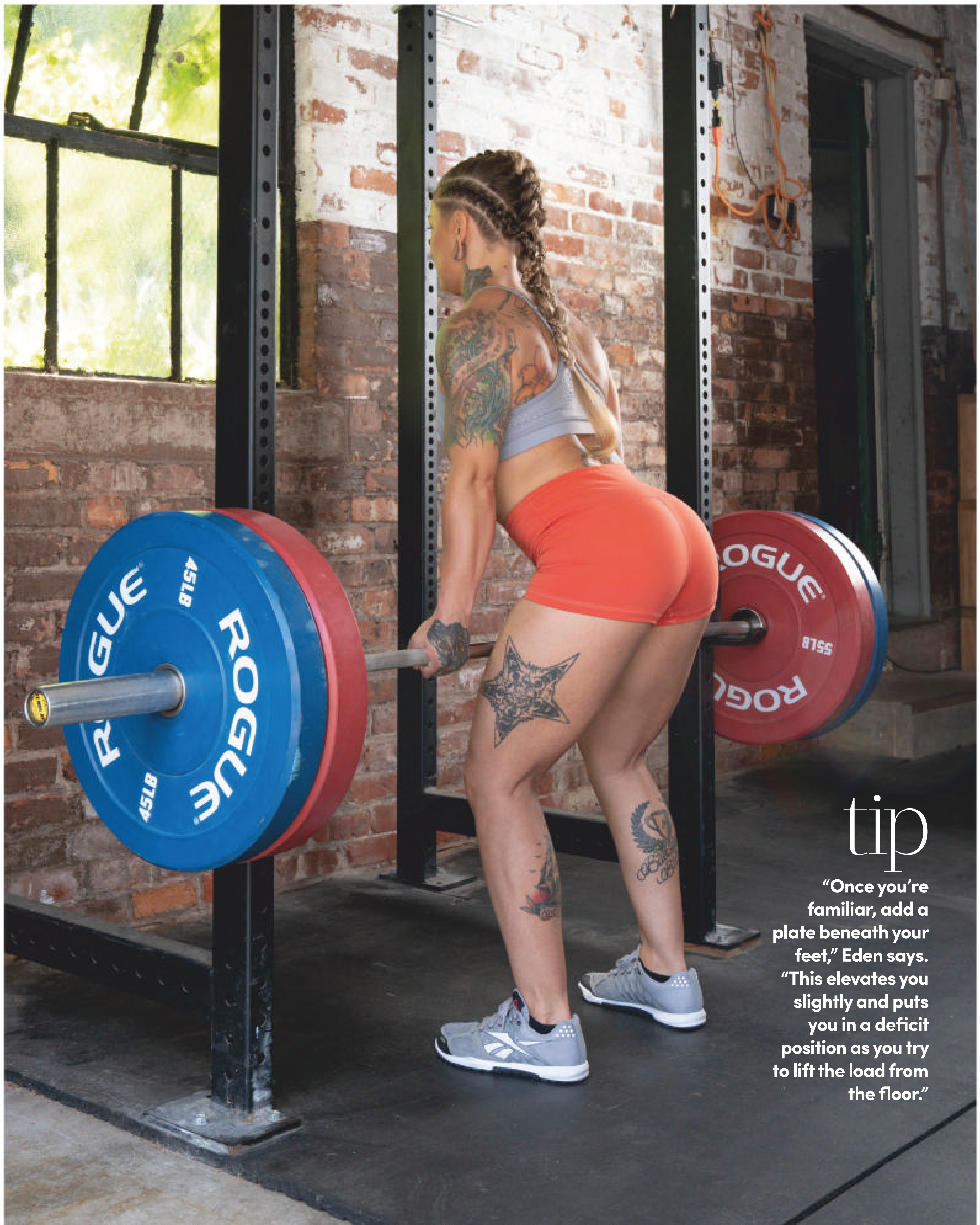
Develop Your Deadlift

▸ISOMETRIC STYLE: NON-YIELDING

As with the bench press and squat, the deadlift can be accentuated using isometrics. This three-position deadlift from Eden is a challenge, but it's well worth the effort.

Load a barbell on the floor with so much weight that you can't lift it, even a little bit. Stand with your feet underneath the bar, push your glutes back, then bend your knees to take a shoulder-width underhand or mixed grip on the bar outside your legs. Pull upward against the bar for five to eight seconds at 100 percent effort for three rounds. Then unload the bar and reload it in a power rack at the midpoint of your deadlift and repeat the above sequence. Finally, set the bar in the rack at a point just before lockout and repeat once more.

NOTE: Don't mix isometric holds with traditional deadlifting. Excessive intensity and possible overexertion can put you at risk for injury, so put them in separate workouts a few times a month.



tip

"Once you're familiar, add a plate beneath your feet," Eden says. "This elevates you slightly and puts you in a deficit position as you try to lift the load from the floor."

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By Matthew Kadey, MS, RD

Spaghetti squash

Good gourd! See why this superior squash is more than a spaghetti stand-in.

P***lenty of carb-conscious*** athletes have adopted spaghetti squash as their go-to replacement for wheat-based pasta. With only 50 calories per 1-cup serving, spaghetti squash contains tons of fiber and nutrients such as potassium, vitamin B6, manganese and vitamin C. Level up your linguni with these five new ways to enjoy this stellar staple.

Prep Step

▸ *Cut down your cook time: Slice squash in half lengthwise and place halves facedown in a microwave-safe dish. Microwave on high 8 to 12 minutes, or until flesh is very tender.*

SQUASH WITH TEMPEH BOLOGNESE

MAKES 2 Servings

INGREDIENTS

2	**tsp canola oil**
1	**small yellow onion, chopped**
1	**medium carrot, chopped**
¼	**tsp salt**
1	**(8-oz) package tempeh, grated**
1	**cup cremini mushrooms, chopped**
2	**cloves garlic, minced**
1½	**cups marinara sauce**
1	**tsp dried oregano**
½	**tsp cumin**
½	**tsp dried chili flakes**
¼	**tsp black pepper**
1	**large spaghetti squash, cooked**
⅓	**cup basil, sliced**
¼	**cup grated Parmesan cheese**

DIRECTIONS

Heat oil in a saucepan over medium. Add onions, carrots and salt and cook until soft, about 5 minutes. Add tempeh, mushrooms and garlic and cook 5 minutes. Stir in marinara sauce, oregano, cumin, chili flakes and black pepper. Simmer 15 minutes. Top squash with sauce, basil and Parmesan.

Nutrition Facts (per serving): calories 486, fat 22 g, carbs 49 g, fiber 4 g, sugar 13 g, protein 30 g, sodium 280 mg

Swap Shop

▸ *TRADE FOR FLOUR-BASED PIZZA CRUST*

Nutrition Upgrade

Double your potassium to help prevent bloating.

▸ Rub 1 teaspoon olive oil on the inside of half cooked squash. Place 2 cups baby spinach, 1 chopped garlic clove, 1 cup marinara sauce, 2 ounces cooked and crumbled turkey sausage, and 2 ounces grated mozzarella cheese inside squash. Bake 15 minutes at 400 F.

▸ *EXCHANGE FOR TORTILLAS IN BURRITOS*

Nutrition Upgrade

Amp your vitamin A intake for better immunity.

▸ Layer ¾ cup pinto beans, ½ cup corn, ½ cup sliced cherry tomatoes and ½ cubed avocado inside half cooked squash. Top with ½ cup salsa, ¼ cup sour cream, 1 tablespoon pumpkin seeds, a squeeze of lime and ¼ cup cilantro.

▸ *SWAP FOR POTATOES IN HASH BROWNS*

Nutrition Upgrade

Slash more than half the calories for a more figure-friendly dish.

▸ Place 2 cups cooked squash in a colander and press out excess water. Toss with 2 teaspoons thyme, ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon black pepper. Form into 2-inch rounds. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a skillet over medium. Cook 5 minutes per side, or until browned and crispy.

▸ *SWITCH FOR PASTA IN SHRIMP SCAMPI*

Nutrition Upgrade

Ditch most of the starchy carbs for better blood sugar control.

▸ Heat 1 tablespoon each butter and olive oil in a large skillet over medium. Add 3 minced garlic cloves and ¼ teaspoon red chili flakes and 8 ounces large, peeled, raw shrimp and cook 2 minutes. Add 4 cups sliced Swiss chard and ½ teaspoon salt and heat until wilted. Toss with cooked squash.

▸ *LEVEL UP FROM LETTUCE IN GREEK SALAD*

Nutrition Upgrade

Ramp up your intake of manganese to reduce inflammation.

▸ Toss 2 cups cooked and cooled squash with ½ cup halved grape tomatoes, ½ chopped cucumber, ¼ sliced red onion, 2 tablespoons sliced olives and ¼ cup crumbled feta. Whisk together 1 tablespoon each olive oil, lemon juice and chopped fresh oregano with ¼ teaspoon each salt and pepper. Toss with salad.

18+

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By Jessie R. Shafer, RD

Say no to late-night noshing

If your goal is fat loss, resist the siren song of your fridge after dark: According to a study published in *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*, eating right before bed could negatively impact your metabolism. Study participants who ate dinner at 10 p.m. versus 6 p.m. had higher blood sugar levels and burned less fat — even though all participants went to bed at 11 p.m. and slept the same number of hours. Researchers believe that a few hours of movement — such as picking up around the house, doing dishes or folding laundry — between your last meal and bedtime can prevent any slowing of glucose assimilation and fat metabolism.

BE REGULAR, STAY REGULAR

Consistency is key to most things in life, including your bathroom habits: According to data published in *Digestive Disease Week*, people who consistently get seven to eight hours of sleep report fewer instances of constipation. This "normal" number of sleep hours seems to be the sweet spot for optimal digestion, and studies show that skewing several hours in either direction could mean GI woes. For example, research done on shift workers with irritable bowel syndrome showed that getting too little sleep increased constipation risk by 30 percent. However, getting too much sleep could be even worse: Study participants who consistently slept more than eight hours displayed a 61 percent increase in constipation, likely because of less movement and inconsistency in sleep-wake patterns. Bottom line? Make streamlining your sleep schedule a priority for better internal health.

Eat to beat fibromyalgia

Yet another reason to be plant-centric: A recent review of studies found that those suffering from fibromyalgia who followed a vegetarian, low-FODMAP or anti-inflammatory diet for several weeks demonstrated the greatest reduction in pain and improvement in function. Diets that emphasize whole, unprocessed foods, such as raw vegetarian and low-FODMAP regimens, seem to be the most beneficial for those with fibromyalgia, but even if you don't suffer from the condition, you could still benefit: Plant-based eating helps ward off most leading diseases and may allow you to better absorb nutrients from your food. Add more raw fruits and veggies, lentils, salmon, quinoa, nuts, and fresh herbs and spices such as turmeric and ginger to your diet to keep you in the pink.

›› More than 4 million Americans suffer from fibromyalgia.

***Fibromyalgia is highly individualized, so seek the advice of a dietitian or nutritionist to determine what foods are best for you.**

Ask the Nutritionist

Q *How accurate are the calorie counts on package labels?*

+A TBH, the calories listed on a Nutrition Facts label are an estimate rather than a strict value – but they are pretty darn close. A calorie is quantified as the amount of energy required to raise the temperature of 1 milliliter of water by 1 degree Celsius. Scientists place a single, whole food in a calorimeter – a device with a combustion chamber, a thermometer and a container of water – and burn it. The rise in water temperature helps determine the approximate number of calories in that food. Most manufacturers use existing databases (rather than conducting zillions of mini Bunsen burner bonfires) to determine the number of calories in each ingredient in a product, which they then add together to help determine their nutrition facts. To calculate the calories of your own recipes, check out calorieking.com or the U.S. Department of Agriculture's food nutrient profile database – FoodData Central (fdc.nal.usda.gov) – for your (pretty accurate) totals.

FIVE FAB FOODS FOR ... BETTER SLEEP

The quality of your sleep is as important as the quantity you get, and what you eat can be of benefit. These five foods improve rather than impair digestion and contain specific nutrients that help optimize sleep.

①
FRUIT
such as bananas, cherries, oranges and pineapple contain melatonin, a hormone that helps regulate your sleep-wake cycle.

②
COTTAGE CHEESE
delivers a solid dose of tryptophan, an amino acid that can increase your serotonin production to combat insomnia.

③
HERBAL TEAS
such as ginger, chamomile or peppermint are caffeine-free and can help you relax before bed.

④
WALNUTS
contain gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), which helps quiet neuron activity in the central nervous system to promote relaxation.

⑤
SPINACH
is high in magnesium, an essential mineral that can decrease insomnia.

FOR THE BEST REST, AVOID CAFFEINE, ALCOHOL AND SPICY FOODS THAT CAN CAUSE HEARTBURN SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE RETIRING FOR THE NIGHT.

By Jessie R. Shafer, RD

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THE PERCENTAGE OF TIME THAT "DR. GOOGLE" provides an accurate medical diagnosis, according to research published in the *Medical Journal of Australia.* Mobile- and web-based symptom checkers are algorithm-based programs that provide potential diagnoses and triage advice, and even though they receive an estimated 70,000 health-related searches every minute, the results they provide are highly inaccurate. Lead study author Michella Hill warns that a general web search will present a diagnosis without taking your full medical history into account and that most symptom trackers are not regulated by a governing body. If your doc has already confirmed you have a medical issue, a web search may help you glean further information about your condition, just take your findings with a grain of salt because remember — Doc Google never went to med school.

SPOTLIGHT ON …

Adaptogens

If 2020 has taught us anything, it's that adaptability is paramount to survival. But sometimes we need a little help in that department. Enter adaptogens, a group of herbs reputed to help you adjust to and recover from physical and mental stress. When faced with a stressor, your body goes through a three-stage response: alarm, resistance and exhaustion. Adaptogens "hack" your stress response, so to speak, by acting on your adrenal glands to produce an anti-depressive and anti-fatigue effect. This helps keep you in the resistance phase for longer — allowing you more clarity and energy before you peter out — after which they can help quell the severity of the exhaustion phase.

Here are some well-researched adaptogens to try:

ADAPTOGEN	EFFECTS
AMERICAN GINSENG	▸ Boosts memory, calmness and immunity
ASHWAGANDHA	▸ Reduces stress and anxiety
CORDYCEPS	▸ Boosts stamina
GOJI BERRY	▸ Increases energy, and physical and mental performance
LICORICE ROOT	▸ Reduces stress
RHODIOLA ROSEA	▸ Staves off physical and mental fatigue
TULSI/HOLY BASIL	▸ Reduces physical and mental stress and anxiety
TURMERIC	▸ Boosts brain function and reduces depression

7-Day Challenge

TRACK YOUR FIBER INTAKE

Fiber delivers a host of benefits, such as fueling healthy gut bacteria, reducing your risk of heart disease, boosting bowel health, controlling blood sugar and supporting weight loss. Women should eat at least 25 grams of fiber daily, but sadly most of us only get about 16 — on a good day.

So for one week, work on increasing your fiber intake. Log all your meals and snacks in a journal, and at the end of each day, tally up the grams of fiber you ingested using the Nutrition Facts panels on the foods you eat or the FoodData Central database (fdc.nal.usda.gov). Coming up short? Add in a couple of servings of vegetables, beans, berries, whole grains and seeds.

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By Sandy Todd Webster

The myths and truths about immunity

It's time to separate science from science fiction when it comes to your health and boost your immunity IQ.

With cold and flu season upon us, there's good reason to question the most common parables about immunity. Here, we leverage science to help deconstruct five of the most fabled assertions about health and the human condition.

Myth: Vitamin C prevents colds.
Truth: Not really, but it may reduce suffering time — a little bit. Meta-analyses examining whether prophylactic doses (200 milligrams) of vitamin C could prevent a cold revealed that there was no reduction in the frequency of catching a cold and only a little evidence — 8 to 14 percent — that it helped reduce the duration of colds. However, when looking specifically at skiers and marathoners in training, researchers found that a 200-plus-milligram dose of vitamin C cut their odds of getting a cold in half. If you regularly do high-intensity workouts, ensure you get your daily recommended 75 milligrams either through supplementation or through diet by way of dark leafy greens, bell peppers, tomatoes and sweet potatoes.

Myth: You should feed a cold and starve a fever.
Truth: Meh, sort of. There is an iota of veracity to this 16th century axiom, but in absence of conclusive scientific evidence, whether you should nosh really comes down to honoring your body cues. Fevers often spike because of bacterial infection, which also can cause nausea and suppress appetite, so it stands to reason that you're probably not craving a pepperoni pizza if your temp is on the rise. In these instances, don't force a feeding but rather focus on hydration. Colds, on the other hand, are viral and might not put a governor on your appetite, so go ahead and eat if you're hungry.

CHICKEN SOUP can be a panacea for both colds and fevers. It's warm and hydrating and appears to prompt anti-inflammatory activity to help you rebound more quickly. For some healthy chicken soup recipes, go to oxygenmag.com/soup.

Myth: Exercise increases immunity.
Truth: Yep. According to the National Institutes of Health, regular exercise does appear to increase immunity and can help prevent certain illnesses such as cardiovascular disease, Type 2 diabetes and several types of cancer. Physical activity improves circulation, which helps distribute immune components throughout your body and helps flush bacteria from your lungs and airways. It also can cause an increase in antibodies and white blood cells to help detect illness earlier, and the rise in core body temperature because of exercise may prevent bacteria from growing and multiplying. Don't overdo it, though: Long-duration endurance training and too-frequent bouts of high-intensity interval training can introduce inflammation and raise the risk of infection in an overtaxed immune system.

Myth: Soap and water is better than hand sanitizer for killing germs.
Truth: You're all washed up: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sudsing up on the reg with soap and water helps reduce the amount of all types of infectious germs and chemicals on your hands, while sanitizer only reduces certain kinds. Moreover, alcohol-based sanitizer indiscriminately kills all bacteria, including any good bugs found on your skin's surface, and could lead to bacterial immunity: A 2018 study published in *Science Translational Medicine* showed that multiple strains of bacteria tested in a hospital setting had "adjusted" to sanitizers and were able to survive for longer periods, even after a good dousing. That same study found that many of those alcohol-tolerant microbial strains also could not be treated with last-line antibiotics. So yes, it's prudent to keep sanitizers on hand as pinch hitters, but it's way better to simply soap up.

Myth: A yogurt a day keeps the doctor away.
Truth: Negatory. Fermented foods that contain live cultures play a strong role in maintaining your microbiome and supporting immunity, but no single food can bulletproof your health, whether consumed habitually or not. Wellness guru Frank Lipman, M.D., recommends adding a small helping of a variety of foods such as sauerkraut, kimchi, miso, kefir and raw, organic apple cider vinegar to your menu a few times a week to help your gut bacteria thrive. And be sure to limit your consumption of sugar and refined flour, which research shows can spark inflammation and suppress immunity.

FLOUR POWER

Baking shouldn't be a grind. Use these alternative flours to take your kitchen

Most baking recipes rely heavily on all-purpose flour, but this super-refined product is a nutritional dud and has about as much flavor as a bag of sand. While whole-wheat flour is a viable substitute, it isn't your only option. These days, all manner of grains, nuts, fruits, beans — even bugs! — are being ground into flours with unique tastes and elevated nutritional chops. We sifted through some current contenders and found six that rose to the top as the best of the best for baking.

game — and your nutrition — to the next level. MATTHEW KADEY, MS, RD

THE NEW RULES OF BAKING

Baking with an alternative flour is a little different from the refined white stuff.

FOLLOW THE LEADER. Winging it the first time you use an alternative flour could mean an epic #kitchenfail. First, try a recipe written specifically for that flour and follow it exactly. Once you see how it reacts, you can start experimenting.

REGARD THE RATIOS. Flours without gluten such as quinoa and brown rice can't be used to replace white flour 1:1 ... if you expect edible results. Begin by trading about a third of the regular flour for the alternative and skew up or down from there, depending on how things turn out.

DEEP FREEZE. Alternative flours are typically less processed and may spoil more rapidly. Store a small amount in a cool, dark cabinet or pantry for immediate use, and freeze the rest for up to a year.

ALMOND, TEFF AND COCONUT FLOURS ARE NATURALLY GLUTEN-FREE.

Here are a few things you need to know before lacing up your apron strings.

RED VELVET PANCAKES

HANDS-ON TIME: 15 MINUTES
COOK TIME: 15 MINUTES
MAKES 4 SERVINGS
TIP: Prepare this batter up to two days in advance and refrigerate. When ready to use, thin with additional milk, if needed.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup oat flour
½ cup almond flour
1 tsp cinnamon
1½ tsp baking powder
½ tsp baking soda
¼ tsp salt
1 cup milk or unsweetened dairy-free milk
½ cup plain Greek yogurt or dairy-free yogurt
1 cup chopped cooked beets
1 medium ripe banana, peeled
zest of 1 lemon
1 large egg

OPTIONAL TOPPINGS

berries
Greek yogurt
maple syrup

DIRECTIONS

Stir together oat flour, almond flour, cinnamon, baking powder, baking soda and salt. Add milk, yogurt, beets, banana and lemon zest to a blender container and blend until smooth. Add egg and pulse to incorporate. Pour mixture over dry ingredients and mix gently to moisten. Let batter rest 10 minutes to absorb excess liquid. Place a greased skillet over medium heat. Pour batter in ¼-cup portions into pan and cook 2 minutes, or until the edges darken and curl inward. Flip and cook 2 minutes more. Serve with desired toppings (if using).

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 3 pancakes, no toppings):
calories 303, fat 12 g, carbs 37 g, fiber 6 g, sugar 10 g, protein 15 g, sodium 216 mg

CHOCOLATE CHUNK COCONUT-TAHINI COOKIES

HANDS-ON TIME: 20 MINUTES
COOK TIME: 10 MINUTES
MAKES 8 SERVINGS

INSTRUCTIONS

1 egg
½ cup coconut sugar or brown sugar
¼ cup tahini
2 tbsp coconut oil, melted and cooled
1 tsp vanilla extract
¾ cup almond flour
¼ cup coconut flour
¼ tsp baking soda
¼ tsp salt
3 oz dark chocolate chunks
pinch flaky salt, optional

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F. Line 2 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. In a large bowl, whisk together egg, sugar, tahini, coconut oil and vanilla until smooth. Gently stir in almond flour, coconut flour, baking soda and salt until you achieve the consistency of cookie dough. Fold in chocolate chunks. Working in 1-tablespoon portions, roll dough into balls and place on prepared baking sheets. Flatten each slightly with your palm. Bake 10 minutes, or until the edges are slightly golden but cookies are still soft to the touch. Sprinkle with flaky salt (if using) and allow to cool 1 to 2 minutes before transferring to a metal cooling rack.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 2 cookies; no added salt):
calories 273, fat 18 g, carbs 25 g, fiber 4 g, sugar 16 g, protein 6 g, sodium 86 mg

TRADE WHITE FLOUR FOR COCONUT FLOUR FOR A BOOST OF HEART-HEALTHY FIBER!

OAT FLOUR

Oat flour is simply a ground-up version of your morning porridge and is an easy swap for all-purpose flour, owing to its flavor neutrality. It's a solid source of beta-glucan, a form of soluble fiber that can help control blood sugar, keep cholesterol in check and promote healthy gut bacteria.

TEST KITCHEN: Opt for oat flour in homemade protein bars, pancakes, cakes, cookies, crumble toppings and scones.

TRADING TIPS: Replace 25 percent of regular flour with oat flour in a recipe. Can't find oat flour at the store? Make your own by pulverizing rolled oats into a fine powder.

TRY IT: Bob's Red Mill Oat Flour ($3.69, **bobsredmill.com**)

ALMOND FLOUR

This Paleo favorite produced from skinless blanched almonds has a consistency more akin to cornmeal than flour. It contains calcium for healthy bones, vitamin E to combat free radicals, magnesium to control blood sugar and dietary fiber to control weight.

TEST KITCHEN: Use it in flourless cakes, muffins, banana bread, pancakes and cookies, or as a breading for chicken and fish.

TRADING TIPS: Use an extra egg when baking with almond flour for added structure. Also, nut flours can accelerate browning, so try baking at a slightly lower temp, say, 325 F instead of 350 F.

TRY IT: Pamela's Almond Flour ($9, **pamelasproducts.com**)

COCONUT FLOUR

Because this no-grain flour is produced by grinding dried, defatted coconut meat, it has less fat than coconut milk or oil but still delivers a sweet tropical flavor. About 70 percent of the carbs found in coconut flour hail from fiber — 8 grams per 2-tablespoon serving — and it's also rich in medium-chain triglycerides, which help promote weight loss, enhance brain and heart heath, and protect against infection.

TEST KITCHEN: Go nuts with this flour in energy bars, muffins, zucchini/banana bread, cakes and flatbreads. Try it as a coating for fish or chicken, or use instead of breadcrumbs for meatballs and meatloaf.

TRADING TIP: Coconut flour absorbs a ton of water, so add liquid in equal amounts. In other words, if you're replacing ¼ cup all-purpose flour with coconut flour, you'll need to add ¼ cup more liquid, as well.

TRY IT: Nutiva Organic Coconut Flour ($6, **nutiva.com**)

CHICKPEA FLOUR

Despite its mild beany flavor, chickpea flour packs a powerful protein punch, with 20 grams per 1-cup serving. It also contains more than a day's worth of folate and, according to the journal *Foods,* may decrease hunger by regulating the release of ghrelin, the hunger hormone.

TEST KITCHEN: Use in savory recipes like falafel, pizza crusts and breads, as a binder in fritters or meatballs, or as a thickener for stews and sauces. It's also easy to sneak into muffins, cookies and scones.

TRADING TIP: Chickpea flour is on the denser side, so make sure you incorporate enough moisture to prevent recipes from parching into bricks.

TRY IT: Just About Foods Organic Chickpea Flour ($4, **justaboutfoods.com)**

TEFF FLOUR

This malty gluten-free flour contains five times the amount of calcium as whole-wheat flour, provides almost 70 percent of your Recommended Daily Value of magnesium and offers up high amounts of lysine, which is essential for the production of protein, hormones, collagen and elastin.

TEST KITCHEN: Teff is especially nice when paired with cocoa powder in treats like cookies, brownies, breads, muffins and waffles.

TRADING TIP: Substitute about 25 percent of the flour in a recipe with teff flour to make it lighter and more tender.

TRY IT: Bob's Red Mill Stone Ground Teff Flour ($8, **bobsredmill.com)**

SPELT FLOUR

This slightly sweet whole-grain flour contains plenty of calcium, selenium, zinc and manganese, and it is a very good source of B vitamins such as niacin.

TEST KITCHEN: Use in crusts, crepes, scones, quiches and tarts.

TRADING TIP: Spelt flour can be used as a 1:1 replacement for white flour but may be more water-soluble, so use about 15 percent less liquid in your recipe.

TRY IT: King Arthur Organic Whole Spelt Flour ($10, **kingarthurflour.com)**

CHICKEN PESTO SOCCA PIZZA

HANDS-ON TIME: 15 MINUTES
COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES
MAKES 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- **1 cup chickpea flour**
- **1 cup water**
- **1 tbsp olive oil**
- **1 tsp Italian seasoning**
- **½ tsp garlic powder**
- **¼ tsp salt**
- **¼ tsp black pepper**
- **¼ cup pesto**
- **¾ lb chicken, cooked and sliced**
- **½ cup red onions, sliced**
- **¼ cup Kalamata olives, sliced**
- **3 oz fresh mozzarella, torn into ½-inch pieces**
- **1 cup arugula**

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 425 F. Line an 8-inch-by-11-inch rimmed baking sheet with lightly greased parchment paper. Add chickpea flour, water, olive oil, Italian seasoning, garlic powder, salt and pepper to a blender cup and blend until smooth. Pour mixture onto prepared pan and spread to the edges. Bake 15 minutes, or until edges have darkened and center of crust is set. Spread pesto over crust and top with chicken, onions, olives and cheese. Bake 10 minutes more, or until cheese is melted. Scatter on arugula and slice into 4 portions.

Nutrition Facts (per serving): calories 372, fat 20 g, carbs 16 g, fiber 4 g, sugar 3 g, protein 30 g, sodium 424 mg

TEFF AND SPELT QUICHE

HANDS-ON TIME: 20 MINUTES
COOK TIME: 25 MINUTES
MAKES 6 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- **1 cup teff flour**
- **¾ cup spelt flour**
- **½ tsp salt, divided**
- **2 tbsp water**
- **⅓ cup + 2 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil**
- **6 large eggs**
- **⅓ cup milk**
- **2 oz soft goat cheese, crumbled**
- **1 cup roasted red peppers, sliced**
- **¾ cup marinated artichoke hearts, drained and sliced**
- **1 tbsp fresh thyme**
- **¼ tsp red chili flakes**

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 F. In a large bowl, combine teff flour, spelt flour and ¼ teaspoon salt. Add water and oil and stir until everything is moist. Press dough into a 9-inch greased tart pan. Bake 15 minutes, then remove and allow to cool 10 minutes. In a large bowl, whisk together eggs and milk. Stir in goat cheese, red peppers, artichoke hearts, thyme, chili flakes and remaining salt. Bake 25 minutes, or until eggs are set in the center. Allow to cool 10 minutes before slicing.

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 417 calories, fat 25 g, carbs 36 g, fiber 6 g, sugar 2 g, protein 15 g, sodium 484 mg

TOWER OF FLOUR

If a food is grindable, someone has probably made a flour out of it. Check out some of these unusual options.

Banana Flour. Made from dried, unripe green bananas, this flour is a standout source of resistant starch, an indigestible fiber that feeds your microbiome for better digestive and immune health.

Brown Rice Flour. This gluten-free grind delivers a host of B vitamins as well as phosphorus and manganese, a mineral that boosts brain and nerve function.

Buckwheat Flour. Despite its name, buckwheat doesn't contain wheat at all; it's actually related to rhubarb. This gluten-free flour contains the antioxidant rutin, which combats the signs of aging and contributes to collagen production.

Coffee Flour. This flour is made from the dehydrated fruit inside which a coffee bean grows, and while it won't give you a caffeine kick, it's a decent source of fiber, delivering 5 grams per tablespoon.

Cricket Flour. Made by milling whole, dried crickets, this chirp-worthy flour has a nutty taste that won't "bug" you, and it contains plenty of iron and a payload of protein — about 10 grams per 2 tablespoons!

Hazelnut Flour. This dessert-worthy flour tenders plenty of anti-inflammatory and heart-healthy fats as well as vitamin B6, folate, phosphorous and zinc.

Rye Flour. This tangy flour varies in color from light to dark, depending on how much of the whole grain it contains, and offers up high concentrations of the essential amino acid proline, which is used to build protein (e.g., muscle cells).

Quinoa Flour. Boasting a slightly grassy flavor, quinoa flour contains more protein than most of its counterparts (about 4 grams per ¼ cup).

THE any-goal MEAL PLAN

Whether you want to lean out, build muscle or break a personal record, tweaking your macronutrient ratios can give you the edge you want.

BY SHOSHANA PRITZKER, RD, CDN, CSSD, CISSN

BUILD MUSCLE
123
GET LEAN
SET GOALS
BOOST PERFORMANCE!

THERE IS NO SUCH THING as a one-size-fits-all diet, and what you should be eating depends largely on your goals. In order to succeed, you have to be specific about your macronutrient ratios so you can best fuel your body for the task at hand.

This plan addresses three goals common to *Oxygen* readers — getting lean, building muscle and boosting performance — and provides a mix-and-match matrix of macro-specific recipes you can leverage to craft the perfect program for you. In combination with the Add-Ins (see sidebar), these recipes have been plugged into three one-week meal plans that support each of these goals. Use these templates as a launch pad for designing your own goal-specific diet.

But remember: Meal plans like this are just a starting point, and you can and should tweak the ratios and meal choices based on your lifestyle, likes, dislikes, allergies, training intensity and experience. Use the Add-Ins and/or adjust the number of servings you eat of an individual recipe to best suit your needs.

CHICKEN SHAWARMA

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

MARINADE
¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 tbsp lemon juice
1½ tsp garlic, crushed
1 tsp ground cumin
2 tsp salt
1 tsp smoked paprika
1 tsp ground coriander
½ tsp black pepper
½ tsp turmeric
¼ tsp cayenne pepper

CHICKEN
1 lb boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into strips
1 lb boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into strips
1 large onion, thinly sliced

DIRECTIONS

Whisk together marinade ingredients in a large bowl, or place in a zip-close bag and shake well. Add chicken and onions and stir/shake to coat. Marinate 30 minutes in the fridge. Preheat oven to 425 F and line a baking sheet with aluminum foil. Remove chicken and onions from marinade and arrange on prepared sheet. Discard marinade. Bake until chicken is golden and cooked through, about 20 to 25 minutes.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 5 oz):
calories 197, protein 23 g, carbs 3 g, fat 11 g

THE NUMBER OF SERVINGS you eat of a particular recipe changes according to your goals. For example, if you're looking to gain muscle, you might be allotted more servings of a protein recipe in a given meal. Pay attention to these measurements in the meal plan charts.

MEATLOAF MUFFINS

MAKES 12 MUFFINS/SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

1 small onion, grated
½ tsp garlic powder
¼ cup whole-wheat breadcrumbs
¼ cup nonfat milk of choice
1 large egg
⅓ cup ketchup, divided
1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
1½ lb 90-95% lean ground beef (You can sub turkey or chicken.)
¼ tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 425 F and coat a muffin tin with nonstick cooking spray. In a large bowl, mix together onions, garlic powder, breadcrumbs, milk, egg, 2 tablespoons ketchup and Worcestershire sauce. Add beef, salt and pepper and mix again. Divide mixture between 12 muffin cups. Brush tops with remaining ketchup. Bake 25 to 30 minutes, or until golden brown and cooked through.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 1 muffin):
calories 107, protein 13 g, carbs 5 g, fat 3 g

TURKEY BURGERS

MAKES 4 BURGERS/SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

1 lb 99% lean ground turkey
1 large egg
½ tsp black pepper
½ tsp garlic powder
½ tsp onion powder
¼ tsp salt
coarse sea salt, to taste

DIRECTIONS

Preheat grill to medium-high. Add all ingredients except coarse sea salt to a large bowl and mix well with hands. Form into 4 patties. Sprinkle both sides with coarse sea salt (to taste). Grill 5 to 7 minutes per side, or until cooked through.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 1 burger):
calories 148, protein 28 g, carbs 1 g, fat 3 g

BARBACOA BEEF

MAKES 12 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

CHIPOTLE SAUCE
3 chipotle peppers in adobo sauce
2 tsp adobo sauce (from can)
3 tbsp lime juice
⅓ cup apple cider vinegar
½ cup low-sodium beef broth or water
2½ tsp garlic, minced
3 tsp ground cumin
2 tsp dried oregano
1 tsp kosher salt
1 tsp black pepper
¼ tsp allspice

BEEF
2 tbsp olive oil
3½ lb beef (top round roast or chuck roast), fat trimmed
½ tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper
1 medium onion, chopped
1 cup low-sodium beef broth
3 tbsp tomato paste
3 bay leaves

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 325 F. Add all sauce ingredients to a blender cup and pulse until smooth. Add olive oil to a large Dutch oven and place over medium-high heat. Season beef on both sides with salt and pepper and add to Dutch oven. Sear 1 to 2 minutes per side, then remove and set aside. Add onions, broth, tomato paste and bay leaves to Dutch oven and cook 1 to 2 minutes, or until onions are soft. Add beef and chipotle sauce and mix well. Cover and place in oven. Bake 3 to 3½ hours, or until beef is very tender. Discard bay leaves and place beef in a shallow dish. Shred with 2 forks. Toss with leftover juices, if desired.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 6 oz):
calories 178, protein 27 g, carbs 3 g, fat 6 g

EGG FRITTATA

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- **3 large eggs**
- **9 large egg whites**
- **¼ cup nonfat milk**
- **1 tsp kosher salt, divided**
- **1 tbsp olive oil**
- **½ cup onions, diced**
- **½ cup mushrooms, diced**
- **¼ tsp ground black pepper**
- **1 cup baby spinach, roughly chopped**
- **2 cloves garlic, minced**
- **2 tsp fresh thyme, minced**

DIRECTIONS

Arrange oven rack in center position and preheat oven to 400 F. In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, egg whites, milk and ½ teaspoon salt. Add oil to a cast-iron or oven-safe skillet and heat over medium. Add onions, mushrooms, salt and pepper and cook 1 to 2 minutes. Add spinach, garlic and thyme and cook until spinach is wilted. Spread veggies out in bottom of pan. Pour in egg mixture and spread evenly. Cook 1 to 2 minutes, or until edges begin to set. Place pan in oven and bake 8 to 10 minutes, or until eggs are set. Set broiler to high and broil 1 to 2 minutes, or until a browned, crispy top is achieved. Cool 5 minutes and then slice into 4 pieces.

Nutrition Facts (per serving):
calories 143, protein 14 g, carbs 5 g, fat 7 g

the any-goal meal plan macro breakdown

GOAL	MACRONUTRIENT %			GRAMS		
	Protein	Carbs	Fat	Protein	Carbs	Fat
▸ Get Lean	40	25	35	160–180	100–113	62–70
▸ Build Muscle	35	35	30	140–158	140–158	53–60
▸ Boost Performance	30	50	20	120–135	220–225	35–40

BUILD MUSCLE

PROTEIN RECIPES

Recipe	Protein	Carbs	Fat	Cals
▸ Meatloaf Muffins	13 grams	5 grams	3 grams	107
▸ Chicken Shawarma	23 grams	3 grams	11 grams	197
▸ Turkey Burgers	28 grams	1 gram	3 grams	148
▸ Egg Frittata	14 grams	5 grams	7 grams	143
▸ Barbacoa Beef	27 grams	3 grams	6 grams	178

Nutrition breakdown per serving

MAPLE CINNAMON OVERNIGHT OATS

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

4 cups rolled oats
1 tsp vanilla extract
2 cups nonfat milk or unsweetened plant-based milk
3 tbsp maple syrup
2 tbsp chia seeds
¾ tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp salt

DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl. Divide between 6 containers. Cover and refrigerate 2 hours, or overnight. Serve cold or warm.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 5.3 oz): calories 282, protein 12 g, carbs 48 g, fat 5 g

SPINACH AND MUSHROOM QUINOA

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp olive oil
1 small onion, chopped
2 tsp garlic, minced
1 cup mushrooms, sliced
1 cup baby spinach, roughly chopped
1 cup dry quinoa
2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
salt and pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

Add oil to a skillet and place over medium-high heat. Add onions, garlic and mushrooms and cook 5 minutes, or until softened. Add spinach and cook until wilted. Set aside. Add quinoa and broth to a saucepan and bring to a boil. Then cover, reduce heat and simmer until quinoa has absorbed all the liquid, about 20 minutes. Fluff with a fork. Add quinoa and veggies to a bowl and toss to combine. Season with salt and pepper (to taste).

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 7 oz): calories 172, protein 5 g, carbs 27 g, fat 5 g

RICE AND BEANS

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

2 tbsp olive oil
1 small onion, chopped
2 tsp garlic, minced
2 cups reduced-sodium vegetable broth
1 (15.5-oz) can black beans, rinsed and drained
1 tsp cumin
1 cup medium-grain white rice
½ tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Heat olive oil in a saucepan over medium. Add onions and garlic and cook until softened, about 3 to 4 minutes. Add broth, beans and cumin and bring to a boil. Stir in rice, then reduce heat, cover and simmer until rice is tender and liquid is absorbed, about 20 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 7 oz): calories 228, protein 7 g, carbs 39 g, fat 5 g

CAJUN ORZO WITH PEAS

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

12 oz dry orzo pasta
1 tbsp olive oil
1 tsp garlic, minced
1 tbsp fresh oregano leaves, coarsely chopped
1 tbsp Cajun seasoning blend
3 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
1½ cups peas
salt and pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

Heat a skillet over medium. Add orzo and olive oil and cook until toasted, about 30 to 60 seconds. Add garlic, oregano and Cajun seasoning and stir to combine. Add broth and bring to a boil. Then cover and simmer 8 to 10 minutes, or until orzo is tender. Add peas and cook until bright green and softened. Season with salt and pepper (to taste).

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 6 oz): calories 205, protein 7 g, carbs 39 g, fat 3 g

LENTIL SALAD

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

1 cup uncooked brown or red lentils
3 cups reduced-sodium vegetable broth
1 English cucumber, finely chopped
1 small red onion, chopped
1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
½ cup sun-dried tomatoes, drained and diced

DRESSING

3 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp Dijon mustard
½ tsp sea salt
¼ tsp black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Add lentils and broth to a saucepan and place over medium-high heat. Bring to a simmer and then reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook until tender, about 20 to 25 minutes. Use a strainer to rinse lentils until cooled, then drain. Place in a large bowl with veggies. Whisk together dressing ingredients. Drizzle over salad and toss to combine.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 12 oz or 1½ cups): calories 294, protein 13 g, carbs 37 g, fat 11 g

CARB RECIPES

Recipe	Protein	Carbs	Fat	Cals
Rice and Beans	7 grams	39 grams	5 grams	228
Cajun Orzo With Peas	7 grams	39 grams	3 grams	205
Lentil Salad	13 grams	37 grams	11 grams	294
Spinach and Mushroom Quinoa	5 grams	27 grams	5 grams	172
Maple Cinnamon Overnight Oats	12 grams	48 grams	5 grams	282

Nutrition breakdown per serving

BOOST
PERFORMANCE!

ADD-INS

Use this mix-and-match table to add in or trade out particular foods and macros to best suit your needs and goals.

FOOD	PROTEIN	CARBS	FAT	CALS
¼ cup chickpeas	3 g	8 g	1 g	53
1 oz raw almonds	6 g	6 g	14 g	164
1 cup steamed brown rice	5 g	46 g	2 g	195
1 cup steamed white rice	4 g	53 g	0 g	242
1 cup steamed mixed vegetables	4 g	16 g	0 g	80
6 oz plain nonfat Greek yogurt	17 g	7 g	0 g	102
¼ cup hummus	5 g	9 g	6 g	102
1 medium apple or banana	1 g	27 g	0 g	100
¼ cup avocado	1 g	5 g	9 g	96
1 slice cheese	6 g	2 g	7 g	90
1 cup cooked salted edamame	17 g	15 g	8 g	189
2 tbsp peanut or almond butter	8 g	6 g	17 g	200

FOOD	PROTEIN	CARBS	FAT	CALS
1 scoop protein powder	20 g	1 g	2 g	100
1 large hard-boiled egg	6 g	1 g	5 g	78
1 large egg white	4 g	0 g	0 g	17
1 whole-wheat English muffin	6 g	23 g	1 g	120
1 small baked potato	3 g	29 g	0 g	130
2 oz baked sweet potato	1 g	12 g	0 g	54
1 tbsp olive oil	0 g	0 g	14 g	120
1 tbsp butter	0 g	0 g	11 g	100
1 tsp maple syrup	0 g	4 g	0 g	17
⅓ cup oatmeal (cooked in water)	4 g	18 g	2 g	102
1 cup ultra-filtered nonfat milk	13 g	6 g	0 g	80
1 slice sprouted-grain bread	4 g	15 g	1 g	80

CILANTRO LIME CAULIFLOWER RICE

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

1 tsp olive oil
2 (10-oz) packages riced cauliflower, thawed
juice of ½ lime
salt and pepper, to taste
¼ cup cilantro, chopped

DIRECTIONS

Place oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add cauliflower rice and saute until heated through, about 3 to 5 minutes. Season with lime juice and salt and pepper (to taste). Toss with cilantro.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 5 oz): calories 44, protein 7 g, carbs 5 g, fat 2 g

CHOPPED VEGETABLE SALAD

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

2 cups romaine lettuce, chopped
1 English cucumber, diced
1 small red onion, diced
1 red bell pepper, seeded and diced
2 ears corn, kernels removed
¼ cup chickpeas
1 cup green beans, cut into ¼-inch pieces
2 medium tomatoes, seeded and diced
2 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
¼ tsp black pepper
¼ tsp salt
¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
¼ cup fresh basil, chopped

DIRECTIONS

Add all ingredients to a large bowl and toss to combine.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 11.8 oz): calories 191, protein 5 g, carbs 29 g, fat 8 g

GARLIC GREEN BEANS

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp olive oil
1 lb green beans
2 tsp garlic, minced
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Place a large skillet over high heat. Add oil and green beans and cook until soft and starting to blister. Add garlic and cook 1 minute. Season with salt and pepper.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 4 oz): calories 68, protein 2 g, carbs 8 g, fat 4 g

VEGETABLE RECIPES

Recipe	Protein	Carbs	Fat	Cals
Chopped Vegetable Salad	5 grams	29 grams	8 grams	191
Garlic Green Beans	2 grams	8 grams	4 grams	68
Cilantro Lime Cauliflower Rice	7 grams	5 grams	2 grams	44

Nutrition breakdown per serving

CHOCOLATE TAHINI BALLS

MAKES 15 BALLS/SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

⅓ cup coconut flour
¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder or raw cacao powder
¼ tsp salt
1 cup tahini
⅓ cup maple syrup
¼ cup sesame seeds

DIRECTIONS

In a large bowl, mix together flour, cocoa powder and salt. Mix in tahini and syrup. Form into 15 balls. Spread sesame seeds on a plate and roll each ball in seeds. Place on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper. Refrigerate 30 minutes.

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 1 ball): calories 133, protein 4 g, carbs 12 g, fat 8 g

BROCCOLI CHEDDAR SOUP

MAKES 8 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

4 cups low-sodium broth
1 medium onion, chopped
1 large carrot, peeled and diced
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 clove garlic, chopped
5 cups broccoli florets
½ cup nonfat milk
¼ tsp black pepper, plus more, to taste
3 tbsp sour cream
2 cups reduced-fat shredded cheddar cheese
salt, to taste

DIRECTIONS

Add broth, onions, carrots, celery and garlic to a stockpot. Bring to a boil, then cover, reduce heat and simmer 5 minutes. Add broccoli, milk and pepper. Cover and cook 10 minutes. Add sour cream and cheese and stir until cheese is melted. Season with salt and pepper (to taste).

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 8 oz): calories 149, protein 12 g, carbs 7 g, fat 9 g

CREAMY GUACAMOLE

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- **1 large avocado, peeled, pitted and mashed**
- **¼ cup sour cream or Greek yogurt**
- **2 tbsp salsa**
- **salt and pepper, to taste**

DIRECTIONS

Add all ingredients to a bowl and mix well. Season with salt and pepper (to taste).

Nutrition Facts (per serving = 2 oz):
calories 91, protein 1 g, carbs 4 g, fat 8 g

GET LEAN

IF YOU PREFER A THICKER SOUP, add 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour to the recipe and puree with an immersion blender before adding in cheese.

FAT RECIPES

Recipe	Protein	Carbs	Fat	Cals
Creamy Guacamole	1 gram	4 grams	8 grams	91
Broccoli Cheddar Soup	12 grams	7 grams	9 grams	149
Chocolate Tahini Balls	4 grams	12 grams	8 grams	133

Nutrition breakdown per serving

the any-goal MEAL PLAN

1 **PROTEIN FORMS THE FOUNDATION** of a muscle-building plan, and this schedule allots you plenty of construction material. Not only does protein work to build and repair muscle, but it also keeps you full for longer while promoting fat loss: Protein has a thermic effect on your body, meaning you have to burn more calories to digest it than you do other macros.

BUILD MUSCLE

2 **CARBOHYDRATES ARE KING** when it comes to energy, and this performance-based plan highlights carbs as your primary macronutrient. You'll be able to run faster, jump higher or stay the distance with this high-octane program.

BOOST PERFORMANCE!

3 **GETTING LEAN IS A STICKY** wicket, but this plan leverages the power of dietary fat to get you results. Fat takes longer to break down and digest, so it sticks with you longer to promote satiety. This is extremely helpful when leaning out because your carb intake is reduced and your stress level — and tendency to get hangry — is amplified.

BUILD MUSCLE

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
BREAKFAST 2 servings Egg Frittata* + 1 low-calorie multigrain English muffin	**BREAKFAST** ⅓ cup oatmeal cooked with water + 1 oz almonds + 2 hard-boiled eggs	**BREAKFAST** ⅓ cup dry oatmeal + 1 scoop protein powder + ½ cup nonfat milk + dash salt; stir and microwave 90 seconds	**BREAKFAST** ⅓ cup dry oatmeal + 1 scoop protein powder + ½ cup nonfat milk + dash salt; stir and microwave 90 seconds	**BREAKFAST** 2 servings Egg Frittata* + 1 low-calorie multigrain English muffin + ½ medium banana	**BREAKFAST** 1 serving Maple Cinnamon Overnight Oats* + 1 scoop protein powder + coffee or water + 1 Chocolate Tahini Ball*	**BREAKFAST** 2 slices toasted sprouted-grain bread + ¼ cup avocado + 6 large egg whites + dash everything bagel seasoning
LUNCH 1 serving Lentil Salad* + 1 Turkey Burger* + ¼ cup chickpeas	**LUNCH** 1 ½ Turkey Burgers* + 1 small baked sweet potato + 1 cup steamed mixed vegetables	**LUNCH** 1 serving Lentil Salad* + 2 servings Chicken Shawarma* + ¼ cup chickpeas	**LUNCH** ⅓ cup oatmeal cooked with water + 1 oz almonds + 2 hard-boiled eggs	**LUNCH** 1 serving Barbacoa Beef* + 1 serving Rice and Beans* + 1 serving Cilantro Lime Cauliflower Rice*	**LUNCH** 1 serving Chicken Shawarma* + 1 serving Creamy Guacamole* + 1 serving Cilantro Lime Cauliflower Rice* + ½ serving Rice and Beans*	**LUNCH** 1 serving Broccoli Cheddar Soup* + 2 Turkey Burgers* + ½ small baked potato
SNACK 1 scoop protein powder + coffee or water + 1 medium banana	**SNACK** 2 scoops protein powder + 8 oz coffee	**SNACK** 1 cup cooked salted edamame + 1 medium apple	**SNACK** 6 oz plain nonfat Greek yogurt + 1 medium banana	**SNACK** 1 Chocolate Tahini Ball* + 1 ½ scoops protein powder + coffee or water	**SNACK** 6 oz plain nonfat Greek yogurt + ½ oz almonds	**SNACK** 1 serving Creamy Guacamole* + 1 sliced bell pepper + 1 cup cooked salted edamame
DINNER 2 servings Chicken Shawarma* + 1 serving Spinach and Mushroom Quinoa*	**DINNER** 1 serving Barbacoa Beef* + 2 servings Rice and Beans* + 1 serving Garlic Green Beans*	**DINNER** 2 Meatloaf Muffins* + 1 serving Broccoli Cheddar Soup* + 1 serving Cilantro Lime Cauliflower Rice*	**DINNER** 1 serving Chopped Vegetable Salad* + 2 servings Chicken Shawarma*	**DINNER** 2 Meatloaf Muffins* + 1 serving Broccoli Cheddar Soup* + 1 serving Spinach and Mushroom Quinoa*	**DINNER** 1 ½ Turkey Burgers* + 1 serving Cajun Orzo With Peas*	**DINNER** 1 serving Barbacoa Beef* + 1 ½ servings Rice and Beans* + 1 serving Chopped Vegetable Salad*
Calories 1,672 **Protein 152 g** **Carbs 139 g** **Fat 61 g**	**Calories 1,679** **Protein 154 g** **Carbs 147 g** **Fat 55 g**	**Calories 1,674** **Protein 151 g** **Carbs 136 g** **Fat 63 g**	**Calories 1,614** **Protein 145 g** **Carbs 145 g** **Fat 54 g**	**Calories 1,725** **Protein 151 g** **Carbs 152 g** **Fat 61 g**	**Calories 1,639** **Protein 138 g** **Carbs 152 g** **Fat 56 g**	**Calories 1,745** **Protein 159 g** **Carbs 150 g** **Fat 61 g**

BOOST PERFORMANCE

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
BREAKFAST 1 serving Egg Frittata* + ⅓ cup oatmeal cooked in water + 1 tbsp maple syrup + 1 medium apple	**BREAKFAST** ⅔ cup oatmeal cooked with water + 1 oz almonds + 1 tbsp maple syrup + 6 scrambled egg whites	**BREAKFAST** ⅓ cup oatmeal + 1 medium banana + 1 scoop protein powder + ½ cup nonfat milk + dash salt; stir and microwave 90 seconds	**BREAKFAST** 1 serving Maple Cinnamon Overnight Oats* + 1½ scoops protein powder + water + 1 Chocolate Tahini Ball*	**BREAKFAST** 1 serving Egg Frittata* + 1 low-calorie multigrain English muffin + 1 medium banana	**BREAKFAST** 1 serving Maple Cinnamon Overnight Oats* + 1 scoop protein powder + coffee or water + 1 medium apple	**BREAKFAST** 2 slices toasted sprouted-grain bread + ¼ cup avocado + 6 large egg whites + dash everything bagel seasoning
LUNCH 1½ servings Lentil Salad* + 1 Turkey Burger* + ¼ cup chickpeas	**LUNCH** 1 Turkey Burger* + 1 small baked sweet potato + 1 cup steamed mixed vegetables	**LUNCH** 1 serving Lentil Salad* + 1 serving Chicken Shawarma* + ¼ cup chickpeas	**LUNCH** 1 Meatloaf Muffin* + 1 serving Cilantro Lime Cauliflower Rice* + 1 cup white rice	**LUNCH** 1 serving Barbacoa Beef* + 1 serving Rice and Beans* + 1 serving Cilantro Lime Cauliflower Rice*	**LUNCH** 1 serving Chicken Shawarma* + 1 serving Creamy Guacamole* + 1 serving Cilantro Lime Cauliflower Rice* + 1 serving Rice and Beans*	**LUNCH** 1 Turkey Burger* + 1 small baked potato + 1 serving Garlic Green Beans*
SNACK 1 scoop protein powder + 8 oz nonfat milk + 1 medium banana	**SNACK** 1 slice sprouted-grain bread + ¼ cup hummus	**SNACK** 1 cup cooked salted edamame + 1 medium apple	**SNACK** 8 oz plain nonfat Greek yogurt + 1 medium banana	**SNACK** 1 Chocolate Tahini Ball* + 1 scoop protein powder + 8 oz nonfat milk	**SNACK** 6 oz plain nonfat Greek yogurt + 1 medium banana	**SNACK** 1 serving Creamy Guacamole* + 1 sliced bell pepper + 1 cup cooked salted edamame
DINNER 1 serving Chicken Shawarma* + 1 serving Spinach and Mushroom Quinoa*	**DINNER** 1 serving Barbacoa Beef* + 2 servings Rice and Beans* + 1 serving Garlic Green Beans*	**DINNER** 2 Meatloaf Muffins* + ½ serving Broccoli Cheddar Soup* + 1 serving Cilantro Lime Cauliflower Rice* + 1 cup white rice	**DINNER** 1 serving Chopped Vegetable Salad* + 1 serving Chicken Shawarma* + 1 slice toasted sprouted-grain bread	**DINNER** 2 Meatloaf Muffins* + 1 serving Spinach and Mushroom Quinoa* + 1 cup white rice	**DINNER** 1½ Turkey Burgers + 1 serving Cajun Orzo With Peas*	**DINNER** 1 serving Barbacoa Beef* + 2 servings Rice and Beans* + 1½ cups mixed steamed vegetables
Calories 1,632 **Protein 127 g** **Carbs 190 g** **Fat 49 g**	**Calories 1,690** **Protein 121 g** **Carbs 200 g** **Fat 49 g**	**Calories 1,749** **Protein 128 g** **Carbs 210 g** **Fat 48 g**	**Calories 1,666** **Protein 123 g** **Carbs 208 g** **Fat 41 g**	**Calories 1,754** **Protein 132 g** **Carbs 212 g** **Fat 44 g**	**Calories 1,738** **Protein 137 g** **Carbs 209 g** **Fat 44 g**	**Calories 1,762** **Protein 131 g** **Carbs 205 g** **Fat 50 g**

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
▸ **BREAKFAST** 2 servings Egg Frittata* + ½ low-calorie multigrain English muffin ▸ **LUNCH** 1 serving Lentil Salad* + 1 Turkey Burger* ▸ **SNACK** 1 Chocolate Tahini Ball* + 1 scoop protein powder + coffee or water ▸ **DINNER** 2 servings Chicken Shawarma* + 1 serving Spinach and Mushroom Quinoa* **Calories 1,637** **Protein 159 g** **Carbs 105 g** **Fat 68 g** 	▸ **BREAKFAST** 6 oz plain nonfat Greek yogurt + ⅓ cup oatmeal cooked with water + 1 oz almonds + 2 hard-boiled eggs ▸ **LUNCH** 1 ½ Turkey Burgers* + 1 small baked sweet potato + 1 tbsp butter + 1 cup steamed mixed vegetables ▸ **SNACK** 2 scoops protein powder + black coffee ▸ **DINNER** 1 serving Barbacoa Beef* + ¾ serving Rice and Beans* + 1 serving Garlic Green Beans* **Calories 1,596** **Protein 162 g** **Carbs 105 g** **Fat 60 g**	▸ **BREAKFAST** ⅓ cup oatmeal + 1 scoop protein powder + ½ cup nonfat milk + dash salt; stir and microwave 90 seconds ▸ **LUNCH** 1 serving Lentil Salad* + 1 serving Garlic Green Beans* + 2 servings Chicken Shawarma* ▸ **SNACK** 1 serving Creamy Guacamole* + 1 sliced bell pepper + 1 cup cooked salted edamame ▸ **DINNER** 2 Meatloaf Muffins* + 1 serving Broccoli Cheddar Soup* **Calories 1,640** **Protein 148 g** **Carbs 109 g** **Fat 72 g**	▸ **BREAKFAST** 1 serving Maple Cinnamon Overnight Oats* + 2 scoops protein powder + water + 1 Chocolate Tahini Ball* ▸ **LUNCH** 2 Meatloaf Muffins* + 1 serving Cilantro Lime Cauliflower Rice* ▸ **SNACK** 6 oz plain nonfat Greek yogurt + 1 oz almonds ▸ **DINNER** 1 serving Garlic Green Beans* + 2 servings Chicken Shawarma* **Calories 1,601** **Protein 157 g** **Carbs 104 g** **Fat 65 g**	▸ **BREAKFAST** 2 servings Egg Frittata* + 1 slice cheese + 1 low-calorie multigrain English muffin ▸ **LUNCH** 1 serving Barbacoa Beef* + 1 serving Rice and Beans* + 1 serving Cilantro Lime Cauliflower Rice* ▸ **SNACK** 1 Chocolate Tahini Ball* + 1 ½ scoops protein powder + water ▸ **DINNER** 2 Meatloaf Muffins* + 1 serving Broccoli Cheddar Soup* **Calories 1,591** **Protein 151 g** **Carbs 113 g** **Fat 62 g**	▸ **BREAKFAST** 1 serving Maple Cinnamon Overnight Oats* + 2 scoops protein powder + coffee or water + 1 Chocolate Tahini Ball* ▸ **LUNCH** 1 serving Chicken Shawarma* + 1 serving Creamy Guacamole* + 1 serving Cilantro Lime Cauliflower Rice* ▸ **SNACK** 6 oz plain nonfat Greek yogurt + 1 oz almonds ▸ **DINNER** 1 ½ Turkey Burgers + ½ serving Cajun Orzo With Peas* **Calories 1,605** **Protein 154 g** **Carbs 117 g** **Fat 61 g**	▸ **BREAKFAST** 2 slices toasted sprouted-grain bread + ¼ cup avocado + 6 large egg whites + dash everything bagel seasoning ▸ **LUNCH** 1 serving Broccoli Cheddar Soup* + 2 Turkey Burgers* ▸ **SNACK** 1 serving Creamy Guacamole* + 1 sliced bell pepper + 1 cup cooked salted edamame ▸ **DINNER** 1 ½ servings Barbacoa Beef* + 1 serving Rice and Beans* + 1 serving Chopped Vegetable Salad* **Calories 1,655** **Protein 167 g** **Carbs 117 g** **Fat 62 g**

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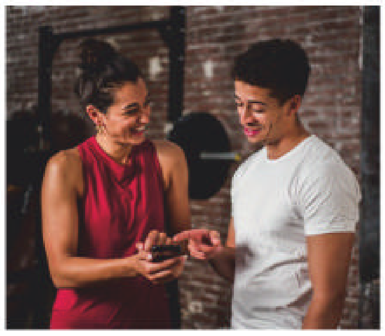

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PLANT-BASED DIETS ARE ON TREND, BUT ACCORDING TO SOME,

Is there a problem with plants?

THERE IS A DARK SIDE TO THIS NEWEST STYLE OF EATING.

> **“*BEANS, BEANS THE MUSICAL FRUIT. THE MORE YOU EAT, THE MORE YOU TOOT. THE MORE YOU TOOT, THE BETTER YOU FEEL. SO EAT YOUR BEANS WITH EVERY MEAL.*”**

This childhood rhyme probably is probably familiar to those of you who spent any time discussing sonorous bodily functions as a kid (in other words, everyone!). It's true that certain foods like beans have a gaseous reputation, but does this toot-inducing tendency indicate an internal issue that ventures beyond a few laughable farts? Maybe, maybe not.

Recently, people have been making seemingly counterintuitive diet changes by replacing nutritional powerhouses like spinach and brown rice with less nutritious options such as iceberg lettuce and white rice. Their reasoning: to avoid ingesting anti-nutrients, naturally occurring compounds found in plants that have recently been vilified by certain medical professionals and Hollywood A-listers who claim they all but destroy your digestive system.

It sounds logical — if nutrients are good, then anti-nutrients must be bad. However, it's really not that simple, and in order to make informed and educated decisions about your diet, you need to understand the nuances of anti-nutrients. | **BY MATTHEW KADEY, MS, RD**

Nutrition Jekyll and Hyde

In living plants, anti-nutrients act as a natural defense system against invaders, including fungi, bacteria and bugs — think of them as Mother Nature's pesticide. The trouble arises with human ingestion: Anti-nutrients bind to other micronutrients in your gut, preventing efficient absorption. "For example, oxalate [in spinach] binds to calcium during digestion, which interferes with the body's absorption of that mineral," explains Sharon Palmer, RD, author of *The Plant-Powered Diet* (The Experiment, July 2012).

Whereas you absorb about 30 percent of the calcium in a glass of milk, you'll only absorb about 5 percent of the calcium in spinach. Similarly, you'll absorb more of the zinc present in meat than you will from grains, nuts or seeds because of the anti-nutrient phytic acid, which ties up much of the zinc they provide. And lectin, an anti-nutrient found in legumes and whole grains, can bind to sugar molecules in your gut, thereby altering their function.

However, the negative impact of anti-nutrients is not consistent, and not only do their effects vary among individuals, but they also change dramatically depending on how a food is prepared. "Lectins, for example, are typically found in foods we don't eat raw and are rendered less harmful by soaking, cooking or otherwise processing a food," Palmer says. Indeed, you'd rarely consider spooning up dry quinoa or tossing back a handful of dry beans. Other methods such as steaming, boiling and fermenting leave many anti-nutrients null and void, thereby changing the nutritional value of a food by leaps and bounds.

Consuming foods with anti-nutrients won't make you nutrient-deficient, either. You can and will absorb many essential minerals from these foods — just maybe not as much as you were expecting. For example, studies on vegetarians show that they generally aren't deficient in minerals like iron and zinc, even though they consume plenty of foods with anti-nutrients such as lectins and oxalates, and other research has shown that habitual consumption of a high-phytate diet minimizes its inhibitory effect on the absorption of minerals such as iron and magnesium.

Worthy of Worry?

While anti-nutrients might sound scary, they're really not that wicked. "Their dangers have been significantly overblown, and the benefits [of healthy eating] clearly outweigh the risks," Palmer says. A large body of research supports eating more — not less — anti-nutrient-containing foods, she adds.

It's also wise to do a little research before jumping to conclusions or blindly taking the opinions of a social media influencer as fact. For example, some people claim that lectins bring about a range of health woes, including inflammation, joint pain and various forms of gastrointestinal hell, but the evidence supporting those claims is razor thin. What's more, certain anti-nutrients have research-backed health-hiking power: Lectins, which are being studied for their anti-cancer and anti-microbial properties, and tannins and glucosinolates have been shown to function as potent antioxidants, helping prevent free-radical damage and ward off a multitude of diseases. "You can't focus only on the potential disadvantages [of anti-nutrients] because these compounds offer so many benefits," Palmer says. In other words, the risk-to-benefit ratio is skewed toward the positive.

FIBER WAS ONCE CONSIDERED AN ANTI-NUTRIENT BECAUSE IT INTERFERES WITH THE VITAMINS AND MINERALS. NOW IT'S CONSIDERED A DIETARY SUPERHERO AND SOMETHING

Gut Check

With all that said, many people do feel poorly after eating anti-nutrient-containing foods, but in many instances, it's a case of mistaken identity. For example, if you bloat after eating a bowl of chili, it might not be because of the lectins in the beans but rather the oligosaccharides — a poorly digested carbohydrate — which are abundant in legumes. Or if a meal containing cauliflower leads to gas and discomfort, you are not necessarily reacting to the glucosinolates found in cruciferous veggies but could instead be sensitive to foods high in FODMAPs (fermentable oligosaccharides, disaccharides, monosaccharides and polyols).

Again, there are ways of preparing your food to mitigate your digestive distress, and in some cases following a low-FODMAP diet can help pinpoint which foods are bad news for your tummy. "But avoiding a whole category of healthful foods, which we know can help reduce the risks of some of the biggest diseases of our time, is not the answer," Palmer concludes. "The one real risk in eliminating too many anti-nutrient-containing foods is that you'll have a much tougher time in meeting your overall nutritional needs, especially if you're very physically active."

ANNULLING ANTI-

Use these simple workarounds

GLUCOSINOLATES/ GOITROGENS

Found in cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, Brussels sprouts and cabbage.

Pitfalls: They may inhibit the absorption of iodine and interfere with thyroid function, which could lead to weight gain and fatigue.
Benefits: Research has shown that glucosinolates and goitrogens help ward off numerous kinds of cancer and can act as antibiotics to help prevent infection.
Tame their power: Boiling or steaming these vegetables significantly diminishes their potency.

- **Tempeh, mung bean sprouts and tofu contain fewer lectins on the whole because of their processing.**

- **A study published in *Methods in Molecular Medicine* found that boiling soybeans for as little as five minutes eliminated nearly all their lectin activity.**

- **According to research published in the *International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition,* a combination of soaking, sprouting and fermenting decreased the phytate content of quinoa by 98 percent.**

NUTRIENTS

so you can eat your broccoli and have your nutrients, too.

LECTINS

Found in legumes, whole grains, nightshade vegetables (e.g., tomatoes, peppers, potatoes), mushrooms and peanuts.

Pitfalls: Lectins can interfere with the absorption of nutrients such as calcium, iron, phosphorous and zinc. They also may irritate your gut and cause bloating, indigestion and gas.
Benefits: Lectins can act as antioxidants to protect against free radicals, can work to control blood sugar, and also have been studied for their role in preventing cancer and boosting immunity.
Tame their power: Cooking essentially wipes out most of the lectins in a food, and soaking, sprouting or fermenting can significantly reduce their content.

OXALATE (oxalic acid)

Found in dark leafy greens, rhubarb, potatoes, cocoa powder, nuts and beans.

Pitfalls: Oxalate binds to calcium, iron and magnesium, making them less available and may contribute to the formation of kidney stones.
Benefits: Foods containing oxalates have innumerable nutritional and digestive benefits, including vitamin A for eye health, vitamins C and E for immunity, and iron for energy and oxygen transport.
Tame its power: Steaming or boiling high-oxalate veggies and soaking and cooking legumes can significantly reduce their oxalate levels. Also, consider eating calcium-rich foods like dairy or a supplement a few hours before or after eating an oxalate-rich food.

PHYTATES (phytic acid)

Found in whole grains, seeds, legumes and nuts.

Pitfalls: Phytates can inhibit absorption of iron, zinc, magnesium and calcium and can cause gas and bloating. Some believe they contribute to leaky gut syndrome.
Benefits: Phytates help improve glucose response, fight cancer, repair DNA and reduce cholesterol.
Tame their power: Consuming an animal protein alongside a phytate-rich food can enhance zinc absorption, and soaking whole grains and nuts for a few hours before consuming them significantly reduces their phytate content. And since fermenting is a weapon against this anti-nutrient, it's time to embrace the sourdough trend.

TANNINS

Found in tea, coffee, wine, nuts, chocolate and certain spices such as cinnamon.

Pitfalls: Tannins bond with iron, making them less available for absorption. They also can cause bloating, diarrhea, constipation and other GI issues.
Benefits: Tannins work as antioxidants and anti-microbials to boost immunity and help fight off certain cancers.
Tame their power: Hold off on taking an iron-containing supplement alongside foods with tannins, and drink tea and coffee in between (instead of with) meals to reduce the chances of poor iron absorption. Consuming a vitamin-C-containing food also can increase iron absorption from plant-based sources, such as a red bell pepper alongside beans.

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▸ACCORDING TO SOME ESTIMATES, THE AVERAGE AMERICAN SPENDS ABOUT 90 PERCENT OF HIS OR HER TIME INDOORS, BUT GOING OUTSIDE WILL NOT ONLY BENEFIT YOUR HEALTH AND YOUR MOOD, BUT IT ALSO MAY HELP YOU HEAL FASTER FROM AN INJURY: ACCORDING TO RESEARCH DONE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH, SPINAL SURGERY PATIENTS EXPERIENCED LESS PAIN AND TOOK FEWER PAIN MEDICATIONS DURING RECOVERY WHEN THEY WERE EXPOSED TO NAUTRAL LIGHT.

By Sandy Todd Webster

S.M.I.L.E. through stress

Protect your mind and body from wear and tear and keep stress at bay with these strategies.

Life can be intense, and the past six months have been exceptionally disquieting on many levels. Whether it's been the pandemic itself or the taxing fallout of illness, quarantine, financial uncertainty or isolation, it's fair to say that people are hella exhausted. But take heart: You can learn to manage your stress levels with a few practical behavioral shifts and some sagacious coping strategies.

The 8-Step Prevention Plan

Human beings are innately wired to deal with on-the-spot stress, such as the heart-pounding fight-or-flight instinct you feel when faced with danger. But our biology is not equipped to handle repeated exposure to acute stressors, and recurring surges of hormones such as cortisol, adrenaline and norepinephrine can ultimately corrode and deregulate cell balance. In a domino effect, other systems break down, causing things like weight gain, insomnia, depression, anxiety and fatigue.

Your best bet is to prevent stress from happening in the first place, and this checklist from Michael Mantell, Ph.D., behavior science consultant and transformational coach, can set you on the preventative path.

1. Exercise and be active every day — but don't overdo it. Too much activity and too little recovery can cause inflammation, which could lead to a host of serious health issues.

2. Cut back on coffee. Caffeine can amplify anxiety, interrupt sleep and disrupt digestion, none of which are helpful to achieving calm and balance.

3. Like Michael Pollan says: Eat food (not too much), mostly plants. The phytochemicals found in plants help balance your mood by aiding in the synthesis of neurotransmitters.

4. Tame your thoughts. Events don't stress you out; your thoughts about those events stress you out. Use meditation to become accepting of the present and observe your thoughts without judgment.

5. *Really* breathe. Deep abdominal breathing connects your body and mind, slows heart rate, relaxes muscles and reduces blood pressure.

6. Implement stress-free thinking. Catch yourself mulling over your doom and gloom scenarios, then challenge them. Do you have any evidence that these will occur? Then turn your thinking from dread to possibility, because even if the worst does happen, you may not like it but you will be able to bear it.

7. Practice compassion. Compassionate people recognize that imperfection and suffering are common, shared human conditions. Give yourself grace and stop worrying about that which you cannot control.

8. Don't just survive — thrive. Look at every setback as a setup for a stronger comeback. This helps you develop resilience, the psychological mechanism that keeps people going.

Now S.M.I.L.E.

Now that you've pre-emptively quelled your stress, it's time to nurture happiness with Mantell's strategy to make you smile.

Savor | All of us could stand to slow down a little and proverbially smell the roses. Linger where you are and mindfully focus on the details of whatever you're doing.

Me | Time to yourself allows you to unwind, reboot your brain, improve your focus and promote your relationships. Even the little things you do during the day add up: Close your office door to shut out distractions, wake up a little earlier to work out or leave your phone in the car when with friends.

Interact | Personal relationships are integral to human happiness, and spending time with others, expressing kindness and doing good deeds reduces stress and promotes connections. However, not all interactions are positive, so avoid those who weigh you down.

Listen | Using your ears can boost your happiness quotient. Listen to the birds chirping or your grandkids playing or the music playing to promote well-being and lift your spirits.

Empathize | Putting yourself in someone else's shoes can actually give you a leg up. Build empathy for others by permitting your own vulnerability and finding commonality with others around you.

By Virginia Pelley

The Deal With Drunkorexia (Yes, It's a Thing)

Have you ever "saved up" your daily calories to indulge in a night of drinking later? Then you have taken part in drunkorexia, which seems to be a growing trend: A recent Australian study of female college students found that nearly 83 percent engaged in drunkorexia-like behaviors over the course of three months, and of that group, more than 28 percent reported regularly and purposely skipping meals, exercising after drinking or purging to avoid gaining weight from excess alcohol calories.

Binge drinking combined with restrictive and disordered eating can lead to nutritional deficiencies, impaired brain and heart function, memory lapses, depression and cirrhosis, says lead study author Alycia Powell-Jones, a clinical psychologist and researcher at the University of South Australia. The study also linked emotional and psychological behavior patterns — such as insufficient self-control, social isolation and emotional deprivation — with drunkorexic behavior, and women who engage in drunkorexia are more likely to rely on unhealthy coping strategies, which can negatively affect their relationships, careers and studies, according to Powell-Jones.

It might require some soul-searching or even professional help to determine whether you're crossing the line into disordered eating. "If you're regularly planning not to eat, what to eat, or how to fit in an extra gym session before or after a weekend of binge drinking more than once a month, seek help," Powell-Jones says.

CYBER CBT

If you're anxious about your health and are still sheltering in place(-ish), you may not need to see a therapist in the flesh: A study published in *JAMA Psychiatry* found that internet-based cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) helped patients manage fear and anxiety just as well as a 45-minute in-person session by using a self-guided instructional book combined with weekly 10-minute therapy sessions conducted on a secure platform.

"Therapist-guided online CBT is based on the same strategies and exercises [as in person therapy], and patients can interact with the treatment content at any time of day," says lead author Erland Axelsson, Ph.D., licensed psychologist at Karolinska Institute in Solna, Sweden. And because health anxiety is similar in nature to other forms of anxiety, Axelsson believes it also could apply to a broader population.

Facing your future

It's one thing to read warnings against sun damage, but it's another thing entirely to see the future of your own face if you forgo protection. In a recent study published in *JAMA Dermatology*, Brazilian teens used an app called Sunface — UV Selfie (free on iOS) to get a glimpse of their not-so-bright future — a face speckled with age spots and wrinkles. The forecast of their damaged visage boosted daily sunscreen use by 15 percent, decreased tanning-bed use and doubled the requests for skin self-exams. Go to oxygenmag.com for our top 10 list of recommended sun-protective products!

Aloha to better health

Jelayne Shelton traded a grim outlook for a healthy lifestyle to become an inspirational influencer.

Anyone who follows Jelayne Shelton on social media quickly becomes enamored with her warmth and energy. The fitness enthusiast and mother of three based in Hawaii embodies the exuberant enthusiasm of a seasoned athlete. However, it took her a long time to arrive at this place, and Shelton's journey of self-discovery and struggle is well-storied.

Weight-Loss Marathon

Shelton's aha moment came in February 2018 shortly after the birth of her second child: She weighed more than 300 pounds and her doctor warned that her life was in jeopardy. Determined to see her kids grow up, Shelton set a lofty goal to lose 100 pounds and laughingly agreed to run the Honolulu Marathon in December at the urging of a friend.

Her work began immediately. She adopted a ketogenic diet and began taking daily 30-minute walks. After a few months, she added 30 minutes of strength training to her schedule three to four days a week, targeting a different bodypart each day. By December, she had lost 25 pounds, and even though she had only a basic foundation of strength and limited physical endurance, Shelton decided to run the marathon she had vowed to do 10 months earlier. To her surprise and delight, she finished. "I proved to myself that if I fully committed to anything in my life, I could make it happen," she says.

Buoyed by her success, Shelton went full steam ahead toward improving her health. She continued doing her daily walks and at-home workouts and, as she gained confidence, transitioned to a gym and incorporated group exercise classes into her routine. She also made it a point to boost her confidence and sense of worth with positive self-talk and prayer. "I knew I had to be my own cheerleader," she says.

Kicking the Addiction

Even though Shelton was inspired by having completed the marathon, she had not adequately addressed her issues with food. "Food was a coping mechanism [I used to compensate] for being bullied and teased by my peers and family members," she says. "The more I ate, the more weight I gained. It became a sort of barrier or shield for me, even though that shield was the very thing that was causing the bullying."

The further she got into her ketogenic lifestyle, the more apparent her nutrition issues became. Cutting back even more on carbs and sweets triggered mood swings and headaches for Shelton, but it also opened her eyes to the severity of her addiction and made it easier to commit to change.

Naturally, the healthier she ate, the better she felt and the more motivated she was to continue. "I had more energy to play with my kids without feeling winded or tired," she says. "My children are also happier now because mommy is happier. That is one of the biggest rewards from this entire journey."

New Horizons

In February 2019, one year after pronouncing it, Shelton met her 100-pound weight-loss goal. She is now a successful social media influencer who motivates others to pursue their health and fitness goals, and her next aim is to become a personal trainer and nutritionist. "Losing weight and getting healthy won't save your marriage or make people like you more," she says. "But making yourself the No. 1 priority is a game changer, and you will come out happier in the end."

▲ Jelayne
Before

stats

Jelayne Shelton/
Ewa Beach, Hawaii
age: 32
height: 5'9"
weight before/after: 306/155
occupation: Social media influencer and owner of Evolve360

Fast Facts

- **Go-to mantra:** "One day you will tell your story of how you overcame what you went through and it will be someone else's survival guide." – Brene Brown
- **Favorite bodypart to train:** Legs
- **Preferred cardio:** Walking
- **Most inspirational hiking spot:** The Makapu'u Lighthouse Trail on Oahu

After Photo Courtesy of Jelayne Shelton

By Sarah Kolvas

From surviving to thriving

After a traumatic event, Tara Cosgrove Pompetti turned to fitness to help reclaim her life.

One chilly Canadian night, 27-year-old Tara Cosgrove Pompetti was brutally attacked by her ex-boyfriend. He stabbed her 18 times, puncturing a lung and kidney. She spent three months recovering in a medically induced coma, but even though her physical health was restored, her mental health was flagging and Pompetti fell into a deep depression. She turned to alcohol and drugs to cope and deftly hid her struggle from others. "I was spiraling up and down on antidepressants and was thinking of suicide," she says. "But you would never have known it since I was performing so well in school and at work."

The Stage of Her Life

Pompetti knew she needed to overcome her addictions to be truly healthy, and though she joined Alcoholics Anonymous and sought the help of medical professionals, nothing stuck. It was then that she discovered fitness model and figure competitions. "It was the perfect mix of passion and discipline that gave me the strength to overcome my battle and reinvent myself," she says. "I decided to compete to have a positive distraction, and two and a half years later, I can say this decision not only changed my life, it *saved* my life."

Pompetti was already familiar with fitness and had followed her fair share of diets, but to be successful at modeling and figure competitions, she knew she needed specialized guidance. So she hired a coach to optimize her progress, keep her accountable and avoid falling back into self-destructive behavior patterns.

Once she began weightlifting strategically and eating more — not less — her physical and mental fitness thrived. She still faced challenges, such as a lack of support and encouragement from family members, but she endured, and as she adopted healthier habits, she simultaneously began dropping both her harmful behaviors and her haters.

Modeling a Healthy Lifestyle

Over the next two years, Pompetti slowly transformed her body and her mindset. She reduced her body fat from 21 to 14 percent and ended up winning the 2018 IDFA Figure and Fitness Model competition and the 2019 Muscle Mania Montreal Figure competition.

Now 32, Pompetti is a successful health and fitness coach and stresses the importance of goal setting and patience to her clients. "You must have goals and structure to stay on track and succeed," she says. "Go at your own pace, and find a strategy that you can sustain over the long run." She also wants to inspire others to overcome their challenges — whether it be abuse, addiction or mental illness — and build true self-confidence. "A situation does not define you — your actions determine your outcome," she says. "Keep on going and you'll realize that life does not happen to you, it happens for you."

stats

Tara Cosgrove Pompetti/Montreal

age: 32

height: 5'1"

weight before/after: 118/122

occupation: Coach and founder of Tiny T Fitness

Tara's Favorites

- **Go-to mantra:** "Only the strong survive." This is what I chose to tattoo on my back after my event.
- **Top training move:** Pull-ups — they are just so empowering.
- **Favorite recipe:** Oatmeal with protein powder, berries and almonds.

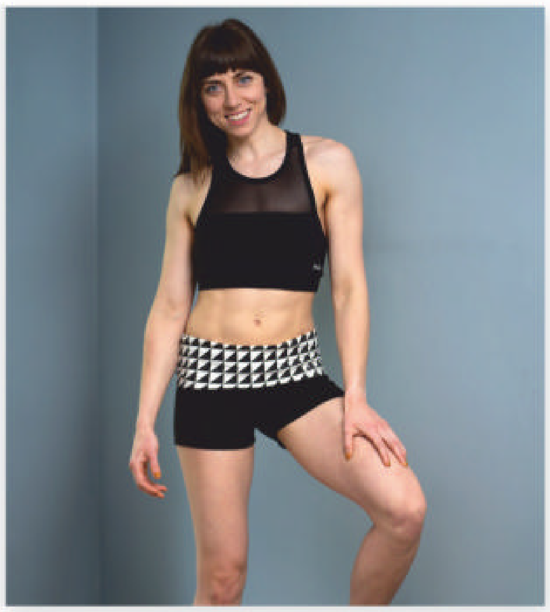
> "A SITUATION DOES NOT DEFINE YOU — YOUR ACTIONS DETERMINE YOUR OUTCOME."

Tara Before

After Photo by Kaleb Shaw

Meet 5 women who've got the fit factor.

CALLING ALL FIT WOMEN
Think you have what it takes? Send your story to futureoffitness@oxygenmag.com.



Cara Poalillo
Maywood, New Jersey
Stats: 31 • 124 lb • 5'6"
Gig: Mindset/nutrition coach, personal trainer, CEO of Ninjababes, *American Ninja Warrior* competitor, American Sign Language interpreter

▸ ***Natural Ninja.*** For Cara Poalillo, sports have always been a constant. Growing up, she played soccer and volleyball and ran track and field. But never in her wildest dreams did she imagine that her natural athleticism would lead her to become a competitor on NBC's *American Ninja Warrior*. Poalillo has competed on two seasons of *ANW*. She currently ranks among the top women in the country, and she cites *Oxygen* coach and *ANW* veteran Angela Gargano as one of her biggest inspirations. "She really goes after her goals, and that pushes me to do the same," Poalillo says.

▸ ***Home Work.*** Poalillo is currently training for the next season of *ANW* and has a killer in-home setup with cliffhangers, ropes, peg graspers and a variety of hanging holds. Outside in her yard, she has constructed a balance tank, wobble walk and several PVC tubes for agility training. She also heads to the gym twice a week to lift, and she is especially fond of pull-up work.

▸ ***Inspiring Others.*** When not Ninja-ing, Poalillo works as an American Sign Language interpreter and shares her at-home workouts with the deaf community on her YouTube channel. She also founded Ninjababes, a community of female ninja warriors that helps women and girls build competitive athletic skills and confidence through online and in-person training. "I tell them just to hang on a little longer," she says when asked how she motivates her clients. "You're going to hit that buzzer and complete the course."

▸ ***Crash and Burn.*** In high school, Kayla DeMarco was an avid volleyball player, but a car accident left her with a severe ankle injury and chronic pain that squashed her ability and desire to be physically active. Her sedentary lifestyle coupled with poor nutrition meant inevitable weight gain, and by college graduation, DeMarco had topped out at 206 pounds. Around the same time, she was diagnosed with multiple autoimmune diseases, including Hashimoto's, mixed connective tissue disease and Raynaud's.

▸ ***Lifestyle Overhaul.*** DeMarco knew she needed to flip her health script, and with the help of a trainer, she lost 60 pounds in a year through hybrid and functional strength training. She also did a 180 with her nutrition by transitioning from processed junk to clean, whole foods — while still eating her favorites in moderation — and monitoring her daily water intake. These days, DeMarco favors lifting over cardio, and she employs a wide range of training methods in her routine, including barbell and kettlebell work, jump rope and Tabatas. "I like to keep my workout plan fresh to maximize results," she says.

▸ ***Insta-Fit.*** Today, healthy living is simply part of her life, and DeMarco has become a certified personal trainer and nutrition coach to help others similarly transform their future. She uses Instagram to keep herself accountable and regularly shares her workouts and fitness goals with her followers to model hard work and consistency. "Know that this journey is a lifestyle — there is no finish line," she says. "If I want my clients and followers to give me their best, I have to practice what I preach."

Kayla DeMarco
Lincolndale, New York
Stats: 26 • 141 lb • 5'4"
Gig: Personal trainer and nutrition coach

Photo by Kyle Mack / Photo by Garry Pitcher

By Sarah Kolvas

Renee Akin
Potomac, Maryland
Stats: 43 • 108 lb • 5'1"
Gig: Sales associate and property manager

▸ *Always on Track.* Exercise doesn't have to be complicated to be effective, a fact that Renee Akin knows very well. Akin ran track and cross-country growing up, and she still runs 5 miles a day, seven days per week. "I only need a pair of good shoes and I have a workout that makes me feel good," she says. Free from the confines of a gym and the need for equipment, running allows Akin to explore the world and improve her health on her own terms.

▸ *All in the Family.* Akin's biggest source of inspiration is her family, especially her three sons — ages 12, 11 and 9 — who are her biggest champions. They also keep her on her toes and regularly engage her to play basketball, soccer, tennis, pingpong and football. She also credits her late mother as her role model because even through stage IV lung cancer, she continued to swim, golf and exercise — "all with a big, warm smile," Akin says.

▸ *Holistic Living.* For Akin, wellness extends beyond exercise, and she focuses intently on everything from nutrition and hydration to stretching and relaxation. She also nourishes her spirit through writing on her website and blog where she explores topics such as self-actualization, literature, culture, spirituality, motherhood and health.

▸ *Right on Pace.* Akin sees herself running well into her future and hopes to enter several more 5K and 10K races in the coming year. "I would [also] like to add more tone to my abdominals and arms!" she admits.

▸ *Gym-thusiast.* Sarah Dorough always loved the challenge and versatility of gymnastics, and growing up, she regularly competed in regional and national championships. "It's so satisfying to be able to balance on your hands!" she says, laughing. Dorough stopped competing because of a back injury but was inspired to follow in her mother's footsteps and go into coaching. Today, she leads her own roster of gymnastics classes and passes her wealth of knowledge on to children ages 3 and older.

▸ *Mind Over Matter.* Dorough's enduring commitment to health and fitness is paired with an equal dedication to the development of mental fortitude. "Fine-tuning your perspective is the first step, and you have to keep a positive mindset and learn to stay strong in order to push yourself," she says. Dorough admits that she herself is continually working on this aspect of wellness, noting that when she gets overwhelmed, her solution is to focus on her goals, reflect on how far she's come and to reach out to her supportive group of friends.

▸ *Facing the Future.* Dorough enjoys pushing her physical limits and incorporates all kinds of movement into her workouts, including calisthenics, cardio, weight training, dancing, kickboxing, Zumba and high-intensity interval training. "I love fun and creative exercises that keep my heart rate up but which don't get boring," Dorough says. Her ultimate dream is to become a personal trainer and online coach who does everything from fitness modeling to hosting handstand workshops.

Sarah Dorough
Suffolk, Virginia
Stats: 19 • 117 lb • 5'4"
Gig: Gymnastics coach

Michelle Lores
Miami
Stats: 36 • 115 lb • 5'5"
Gig: Personal trainer

▸ *Stunt Double.* Michelle Lores can tick innumerable sports off her bucket list, including basketball, gymnastics, swimming and martial arts. She has done stunt work in commercials and films such as *Catwoman* and *iRobot* and as a Cirque du Soleil performer in Vancouver, Canada. But Lores was not always so prosperous and had to overcome many obstacles to arrive at her current state of success.

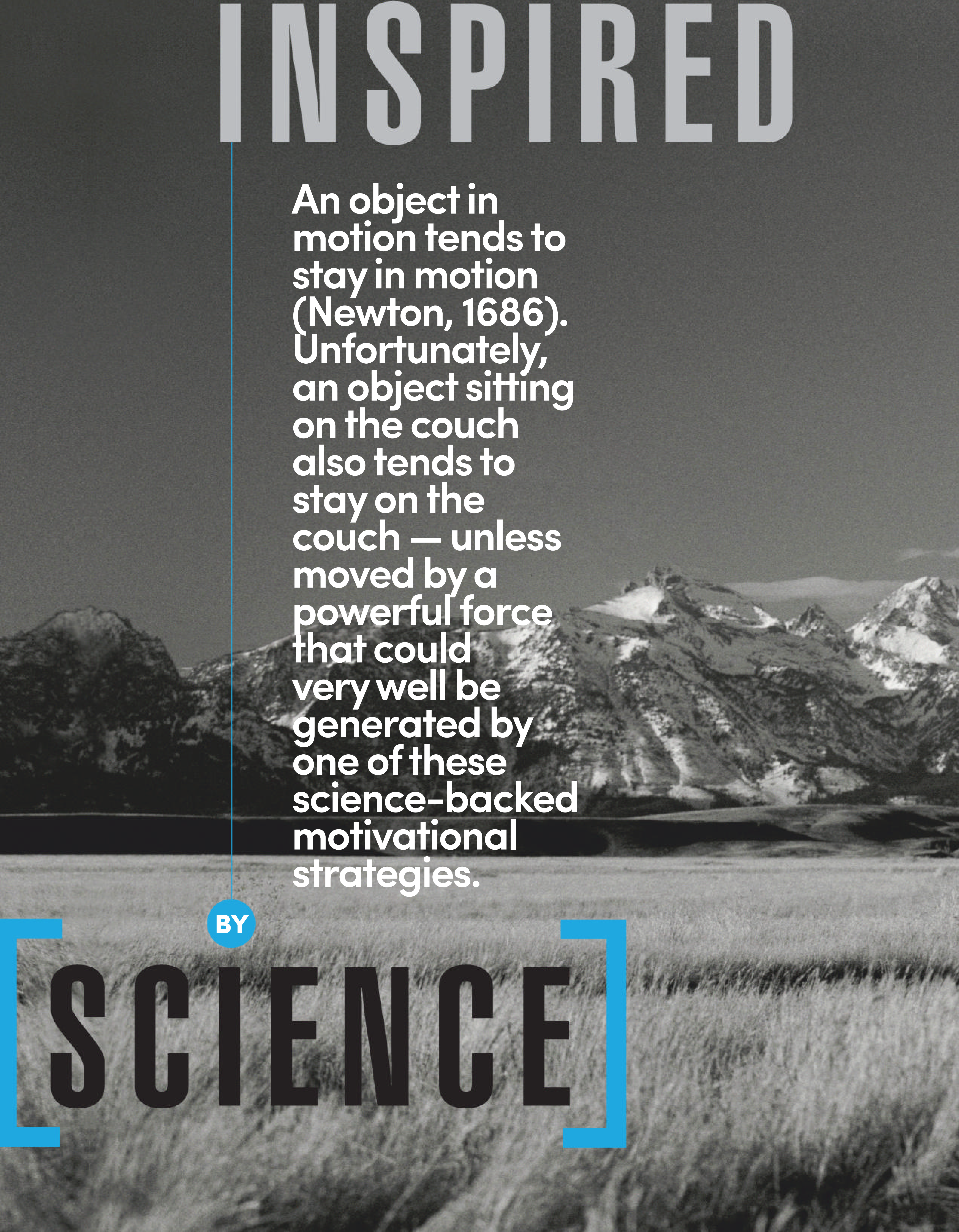
▸ *Survival of the Fittest.* Lores and her family migrated to Canada from the Dominican Republic, but as a child, she faced abuse at home and bullying at school. As an adult, she suffered years of emotional and physical abuse in a toxic relationship before finding the courage to leave with her two young daughters. "I've competed every day of my life against statistics, opposing forces, mediocrity and oppression," she says.

▸ *The Method for Her Madness.* Lores sees fitness as a way to strengthen the body but also as artistic expression. Her training — which she calls "the method" — is an amalgamation of traditional strength and aerobic training, mind-body practices, energy disbursement, dance and bodyweight flow. Her regular routine also includes meditation, music, hydra-therapy, aromatherapy and writing.

▸ *Happy Camper.* Lores regularly participates in wilderness survival camps, and over the years, she has learned to white-water raft, hunt and start a fire. The camps also have taught Lores how to become more resilient and have empowered her to take charge of her life, despite any and all hardships. "The only difference between being buried and being planted is rising up," she says.

Photo by Basil Youssef / Photo by Jimmy Dorough / Photo by Madison McNally

INSPIRED BY SCIENCE



An object in motion tends to stay in motion (Newton, 1686). Unfortunately, an object sitting on the couch also tends to stay on the couch — unless moved by a powerful force that could very well be generated by one of these science-backed motivational strategies.

IN the field of exercise psychology, there's something called the "rational education" approach. A 2020 research paper published in the *British Journal of Health Psychology* described the concept succinctly:

> *This approach assumes that individuals are rational and if provided with complete information pertaining to a behaviour, they are likely to change their behaviour in the desired manner. … Nonetheless, it is quickly becoming evident that individuals often behave in ways that do not serve their self-interests (Ekkekakis & Zenko, 2016).*

Translation: The rational approach is failing. Look better, be healthier, have better sex — it sounds like a bulletproof sales pitch for consistent exercise, but it's clearly not working for the vast majority of the population. (You know the obesity stats; no need for another recap.) Time for a motivational refresh.

The following five exercise-related strategies are not the same old clichéd hacks that abound on social media. Rather, they are derived from actual peer-reviewed research studies, and implementing one or more of them could make your workouts more engaging, more enjoyable and yes, more motivating. | **BY JOE WUEBBEN**

NO. 1

BE PROCESS-ORIENTED

As you know, the more specific a goal, the better your chances are for success. For example, instead of saying, *I want to lose weight* or *I want to eat healthy,* your goal should be something like *I want to lose 5 pounds of body fat* or *I will add at least three servings of vegetables to my daily meals.* These are called outcome goals because they express a desired result, and as long as they're attainable, they have their place in your motivation arsenal.

However, process goals, in which the action itself is the objective, are often more effective in terms of motivation, and the more specific you are about what you're going to do, when you're going to do it and for how long, the better. In a prominent United Kingdom study, researchers analyzed three groups of exercisers over a two-week period. One group received materials espousing the benefits of exercise at the beginning of the program; another group was required to write down the exact day, time and place they planned to execute at least 20 minutes of exercise; and a third control group received no materials or instructions at all. The results were significant: Ninety-one percent of those who wrote down a day/time/place for exercise got their workouts in, whereas less than 40 percent of those in the other two groups actually followed through.

ENJOY THE PROCESS. A process goal should be a specific, actionable item. "This could be, *I will go to the gym and walk on a treadmill for 15 minutes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday this week,*" says Olivia Papakyrikos, a mental health clinician at Walden Behavioral Care in Waltham, Massachusetts. "If the goal is realistic and attainable, by the end of the week, you will have achieved [it] and boosted your confidence."

This is not to say you should avoid outcome goals altogether — just tie them to your process goals for a better chance at success. "A fat-loss goal is awesome, and it might be powerful first thing Monday morning when you're fresh and see the big picture," says Lisa Lewis, Ed.D., licensed psychologist and owner of Dr. Lewis Consulting and Psychotherapy. "But that stand-alone goal can fall short on Saturday night when you're out with friends and there are chips and salsa and margaritas in your face. In those moments, when the long game feels far away, you need shorter-term process goals." In other words, she says, outcome goals provide the vision; process goals are the trail of breadcrumbs that get you there.

GIVE YOUR GOALS THE "DEAD MAN TEST"

Dropping bad habits helps you achieve your goals, but don't make avoidance your main focus. "Set goals to add, accomplish or gain something, and avoid setting 'not-to' or 'stop' goals," Lisa Lewis says. "Instead of setting out not to sit on the couch all weekend, set out to go for a bike ride on Saturday afternoon."

To determine whether your goal game is on point, run your intended achievement through the Dead Man Test (DMT). This concept, introduced in 1965 by late behavioral psychologist Ogden Lindsley, Ph.D., states that anything a deceased person can do doesn't qualify as behavior, and thus shouldn't be a goal. For instance, stop eating Doritos or don't miss your workout. Here are some goals that would pass or fail the DMT:

PASS

- I will do a 20-minute resistance-training circuit on Monday and Wednesday this week and will take Spin classes on Tuesday and Thursday.
- I will wake at 6 a.m., get dressed and walk 2 miles before breakfast on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday.
- I will meal-prep on Sunday and prepack my lunches for the entire week.

FAIL

- I won't snack late at night.
- I will stop eating unhealthy carbs like pasta, chips and sweets.
- I won't skip the gym after work.

NO. 2

IMAGINE YOURSELF MOTIVATED

According to recent research, mental imagery, during which you create a script of what you're going to do and recite it to yourself regularly, can boost your motivation to exercise. The study, published in *Psychology of Sport and Exercise* headed by exercise psychology professor Peter Giacobbi, Ph.D., analyzed exercise performance and adherence in two groups of female college students. Both groups received exercise-related peer mentoring, but only one group used mental imagery consisting of a short script recited daily for roughly 12 weeks. Results showed that the women using a script reported significantly greater increases in motivation than those receiving mentoring alone.

SCRIPT YOURSELF. "Our work has shown that when people sit down and use guided imagery for five to 15 minutes a day and visualize themselves achieving their health and fitness goals, they see positive effects," Giacobbi says. To get you started, he recommends writing a short script — about 150 words — and reading it to yourself daily, or at least on workout days. "Think about a day that you exercised and accomplished a great workout," he says. "Write out your thoughts, feelings and experiences from that workout and use those themes for your script. Include motivational and confidence-enhancing messages." The more vivid and detailed the script, the more effective it is.

Giacobbi and his team used these prompts (among other instructions) during their study to help subjects formulate their scripts:

- Feel the strength of your muscles and imagine the healthier, leaner body you are working to create.
- Tell yourself that this strenuous exercise is worth the effort.
- You will be stronger and look better because of your hard work.
- Create the picture of your new fit, lean body.
- Enjoy the feelings of strength, accomplishment and confidence. You look and feel great.

WOMEN USING A VIVID AND SPECIFIC SCRIPT REPORTED A GREARTER INCREASE IN MOTIVATION THAN THOSE WHO RECEIVED MENTORING ALONE.

NO. 3
MAKE YOUR SOUNDTRACK SPECIFIC

Research as far back as the 1960s has shown music to be an ergogenic aid in the development of fundamental motor skills, and it's now an accepted fact that music can help increase work capacity, endurance and strength while also decreasing fatigue and perceived exertion. It's literally the cheapest motivational fitness coach money can buy. Getting the full effect of music, however, isn't as simple as just listening to your favorite songs during a workout. Aspects like tempo, rhythm, meter and even lyrics need to be taken into consideration, and specific types of music pair better with certain activities and goals than others.

"The judicious use of music can bring about measurable and meaningful benefits to human performance — particularly when the beat is synced with work rate," says Costas Karageorghis, Ph.D., professor at Brunel University London.

LISTEN HERE. In his book *Applying Music in Exercise and Sport* (Human Kinetics, August 2016), Karageorghis offers specific songs for various types of goals and workouts.

Preworkout

"Close your eyes [for three minutes] and imagine yourself performing at your peak," Karageorghis suggests. Choose one of the below songs for preworkout power:

- Roar, by Katy Perry
- Gold, by Spandau Ballet
- Search for the Hero, by M People

Strength Training

Because your heart rate is relatively low during traditional strength training, Karageorghis suggests songs with a tempo between 110 and 130 beats per minute. For example, pick one of these tracks:

- Iron Man, by Black Sabbath
- Power, by Kanye West, featuring Dwele
- Black Dog, by Led Zeppelin
- Don't Push Me, by 50 Cent, featuring Lloyd Banks and Eminem

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Treadmill Running

On a treadmill, you can either run in step to the beat or not. Here are Karageorghis' top treadmill tunes:

- Runaway, by Linkin Park
- Run, Baby, Run, by Sheryl Crow
- Run the World (Girls), by Beyoncé
- Running Up That Hill, by Kate Bush

▶ To see additional music suggestions from Costas Karageorghis for stretching, core training and more, go to oxygenmag.com/costas or check out his book on amazon.com.

NO. 4
SEEK COMPETENCY

Getting better at something rather than just going through the motions and/or just trying to bang out a workout for the sake of burning calories is highly motivating. In psychology, this is known as the self-determination theory, which states that humans have an innate need for competence, relatedness (being connected to something) and autonomy.

"When we engage in activities where we can learn skills, get good [at them] and feel like a badass, it creates motivation that sticks," Lewis says. "For example, people who get into martial arts really enjoy not just the moving [part of it] but also the learning part."

Another word for this concept is "flow," coined by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Ph.D., in his best-selling book of the same name *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, July 2008). "Csikszentmihalyi's concept is about getting into the zone and practicing your 'craft,'" Lewis says. "This makes people happy, is intrinsically motivating and improves performance."

FIND YOUR FLOW. Some physical activities involve more technique and skill development than others and, arguably, are better able to satisfy your craving for competency. "Sign up for a dance class, enroll in an introductory kettlebell training workshop or watch a few YouTube videos on drills to improve your breaststroke," Lewis suggests. Sprinkle in a couple of skill-based disciplines to complement your existing fitness routine and amp your motivation quotient.

NO. 5
BE VIRTUALLY MOVED

In recent years, brands like Peloton, NordicTrack and Mirror have provided a motivational boost via coaching and virtual environments on a computer screen. Now, fitness technology is becoming even more immersive with the use of virtual reality headsets.

In a recent study published in the *British Journal of Health Psychology,* Karageorghis and colleagues examined subjects doing a stationary cycling workout while wearing VR headsets and were shown computerized scenes of a rolling French countryside. The subjects who used VR experienced more positive emotions, felt more energized, focused less on feelings of discomfort and fatigue, and reported greater overall enjoyment during the workout. The effects were compounded when subjects used VR and listened to music simultaneously.

"VR almost takes the 'work' out of a workout," Karageorghis says. "It is now highly accessible through use of a headset and a cellphone. You can exchange the scene of your living room for the California coast during your indoor cycling routine!"

GET CYBERNETIC. The headsets used in the above VR study were provided by Oculus and were combined with VZfit apps by VirZOOM, both of which can be used with a stationary bike or an elliptical trainer (oculus.com, virzoom.com).

MELDING MIND + MUSCLE

BY JILL SCHILDHOUSE

IS THE MIND-MUSCLE CONNECTION REALLY A THING? SEE WHAT SCIENCE HAS TO SAY ABOUT THIS OFT-DEBATED PHENOMENON AND HOW DEVELOPING A LASER-LIKE FOCUS MAY BE THE MISSING LINK IN YOUR TRAINING.

THINK BACK TO YOUR LAST LIFTING WORKOUT — WERE YOU 100 PERCENT FOCUSED on the task at hand, or were you contemplating what to make for dinner, stewing about work or daydreaming about a vacation? It's easy to let your mind wander while doing an activity you've done a thousand times before (more biceps curls — zzz …), but switching your brain to autopilot could be negatively impacting your results and may be making that elusive mind-muscle connection even harder to establish.

"Some fitness enthusiasts are skeptical about the mind-muscle connection and think it's bro-science quackery," explains kinesiologist Jessica Kasten, MS, NSCA-CSCS, CPT. "But it's been used for years by bodybuilders who swear by its effectiveness, and new research backs up their claims."

THEY'RE CALLED "CONCENTRATION CURLS" FOR A REASON

Visualization is used by athletes of all levels, and the pros spend a lot of time mentally improving their performance by seeing the basketball go into the hoop, feeling their skis carve perfect turns and watching themselves cross the finish line first to win their 5K. A mind-muscle connection is a little different, however, and occurs when you actively think about and focus on feeling a target muscle contract and extend as you are actually doing a movement.

"The mind-muscle connection brings conscious awareness to a working bodypart or movement pattern that is free of distraction," says Matthew Zanis, DPT, physical therapist at the U.S. Olympic Performance Center. "For example, directing your attention to flexing and squeezing the biceps [in a curl] focuses your brain on that exact muscle, resulting in the body pumping more blood, making neural connections and releasing chemical mediators that set the stage for higher levels of performance in the form of strength, size and power."

This is also known as an "internal focus of attention" and is a beneficial skill if you're looking to develop size and strength. An external focus of attention, on the other hand, is task-oriented and involves cues such as driving through the floor with your heels or moving the weight as slowly as possible. These are more beneficial for motor control, performance and athleticism.

WHERE FOCUS GOES, CHEMISTRY FLOWS

So how does all this work, exactly? Imagine that your muscles and nerves speak different languages; a neurotransmitter called acetylcholine is the translator that helps them communicate. The better the communication, the more muscle fibers are recruited and the greater the muscular contraction. "Acetylcholine is released into the neuromuscular junction, a small space between a nerve and a muscle fiber, telling the muscles to turn on," Kasten says. "This molecular signaling … contributes to greater muscle growth and adaptation."

"When the mind is connected well with the body, high levels of three important neurotransmitters are released: brain-derived neurotrophic factor, vascular endothelial growth factor and fibroblast growth factor," Zanis adds. "Together, these help develop bigger and more connected nerves and enhance neuroplasticity — the ability of the brain to adapt, grow and evolve with new movement patterns — making us more coordinated, stronger and better movers."

Honing in on your mind-muscle connection also can ingrain stronger muscle memory, which can work to your advantage if you're injured or are forced to be sedentary. "Consciously thinking about moving and engaging a target muscle can actually strengthen that muscle with no exercise at all," says Kasten, citing a study in the *Journal of Neurophysiology* in which participants wore surgical casts on their wrists for four weeks: Half were instructed to imagine flexing their wrists for 11 minutes per day, five times a week. The other half did nothing. When the casts were removed, the group who imagined flexing their muscles had double the strength of the control group.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Improving your mind-muscle connection is all about repetition. Here are Kasten's tips to help you construct a strong connection, starting from ground zero.

✚ **Begin with a single-joint exercise.** Practicing with a move such as a biceps curl or a leg extension makes it easier to identify and isolate a specific muscle on which you should focus.

✚ **Use a moderate load.** Going too heavy automatically shifts your focus from internal to external, negating your potential benefits. Choose a weight that is 60 percent or less of your one-rep max, and complete between 12 and 20 reps for best results.

✚ **Perfect your form.** Sloppy technique requires additional muscles to engage in order to perform an exercise, which ultimately distracts you from paying close attention to the movement of the target muscle.

✚ **Focus on each rep from start to finish.** As you begin your lift, consciously activate and shorten the muscle on the way up (concentric), squeeze it hard at the top (isometric), then consciously feel it engage and resist on the extension as it lengthens (eccentric). Move slowly to best pinpoint your focus.

✚ **Limit your distractions.** Put away your phone or pause your music so you can give your full attention to the exercise.

✚ **Flex between sets.** Contracting and focusing on the target muscle helps improve the mind-muscle connection by allowing you to feel it and activate it even while you're not lifting. It also gives you a bit more of a pump and allows you to sneak a little more volume into your workout.

> A recent study published in the *European Journal of Sport Science* compared the effects of applying an internal (mind-muscle) versus an external focus of attention to resistance training on muscle adaptations such as hypertrophy and strength. After eight weeks, subjects in the internal focus group demonstrated significantly greater biceps growth — 12.4 versus 6.9 percent — than those with an external focus.

MENTALLY FOCUSING ON YOUR MOVEMENT PATTERNS TRIGGERS THE PHYSICAL RELEASE OF MUSCLE-BUIDLING CHEMICALS AND ENHANCES NEUROPLASTICITY — THE ABILITY OF YOUR BRAIN TO LEARN, GROW AND ADAPT.

By Judy Minich

Mission accomplished

Skye Halliday Wilson moves ahead full steam as she realizes her dream of becoming a fitness trainer.

It's been an unnaturally challenging journey, but only a few more steps remain before Skye Halliday Wilson becomes a certified group fitness instructor. "I have two more sections of my ISSA exam to complete, then I will have to get my CPR recertification — and of course, it's been hard to find a class," she says. "But I finished a mentorship and was brought on part time as a group coach at Funktional Fitness one day per week."

Skye Net

Wilson used her mandated at-home time to develop fresh ways to move and vetted her experiments on social media. "People were desperate for ideas on how to keep moving, so I changed up my content to help fill that need," she says. "Clients will always want in-person sessions, but Zoom and Instagram workouts have showed people that they don't need to spend hours of their day or have tons of equipment to make strides toward a healthier lifestyle."

Wilson used her followers' feedback to create a unique roster of exercises, which she now plans to leverage in a group fitness format and with her personal training clients — which, according to her, are in no short supply. "Once our shelter-in-place [order] was lifted, I was able to secure two new clients that same day!" she says. "I think this time has showed many of us that our health is crucial and is something we cannot take for granted."

However, Wilson is still respectful of those who are not yet ready to train in person and has designed an at-home workout guide that is free to anyone who asks. She also has plans to build a full-service online platform so she can reach even more people.

Reigniting Motivation

Many people let fitness fall by the wayside during the first half of the year, but Wilson believes the mental aspect of starting over may be even harder than the physical. "Like they say, your body doesn't quit, your brain does," she says. "Our bodies are machines. They are built to move. Our minds, however, can talk us into (or out of!) just about anything. Your workouts will be hard. You will want to quit. But you have to find the inner strength to push past those feelings and keep going."

Developing this mind-body connection is useful when it comes to exercise, but Wilson also believes it is important when it comes to self-worth. "This connection is huge when it comes to loving your body," she says. "Ask any woman on the street and she'll name a list of the things she doesn't like about herself. It took me a long time to start focusing more on what my body can do rather than what it looks like, and it's something I still work on every day."

For those struggling with this issue, as well, Wilson recommends actually speaking your thoughts out loud to help flip the script. "For example, this past week, I put on a pair of old shorts and man, they were tight!" she says. "I started feeling bad about myself, but then I took a deep breath and said out loud, *Your thighs are what allow you to squat a heavy barbell. They push the pedals up huge hills on your mountain bike. They allow you to walk, run and swim.* Then I put on a better-fitting pair of shorts and left the negativity behind. It's not easy, and sometimes I feel silly doing it, but we have to flip that script. We need to begin saying out loud the things we love about ourselves and our bodies."

Skye Halliday Wilson

Mesa, Arizona
age: 26
height: 5′6″
occupation: Health and nutrition coach
Instagram: @Skyehallidaywilson

▸ Interested in becoming a certified personal trainer or group fitness instructor? Go to issaonline.com and change your future today!

Photo by Lindsay Miller

exhale

BE JOYFUL AND INSPIRE OTHERS

> DO NOT FOLLOW WHERE THE PATH MAY LEAD. GO INSTEAD WHERE THERE IS NO PATH AND LEAVE A TRAIL.
>
> — RALPH WALDO EMERSON